ECCLESIASTICUM:

OR

A PLAIN and FAMILIAR Christian Conference,

CONCERNING

Goſpel Churches, and Order.

For the Information and Benefit of thoſe, who ſhall ſeek the Lord their God, and ask the way to *Zion*, with their faces thitherward;

SAYING,

Come and let us joyn our ſelves unto the Lord in a perpetual Covenant that ſhall not be forgotten.

My People have been loſt Sheep: their Shepherds have cauſed them to go aſtray, they have turned them away in the Mountains, they have gone from Mountain to Hill, they have forgotten their reſting place, Jer. 50. 5, 6.

Shew me thy ways, O Lord teach me thy Paths, Pſal. 25. 3, 4. & 27. 11. & 119. 12, 33.

How goodly are thy Tents, O Jacob, *and thy Tabernacles, O* Iſrael! *Numb.* 24. 6, 7.

Tell me, O thou whom my Soul loveth, where thou feedeſt, where thou makeſt thy flocks to lye down at noon; for why ſhould I be as one that turns aſide to the flocks of thy Companions? Cant. 1. 7. *by Isaac Chauncy*

LONDON,

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THE PREFACE TO THE READER.

HOW *ſmall ſoever* the ſtone cut out without hands, *now ſeems to be, and hath been for many Ages*, viz. A poor afflicted People truſting in the Name of the Lord, *Zion* whom no man regardeth, a Remnant, a Cottage, a perſecuted Woman in the Wilderneſs; *Yet it is great in the Eyes of the Lord, and in the Eyes of every one that fears his Name, even exalted above all Mountains and Hills, in regard of it's ſpiritual beauty and preciouſneſs, and ſhall e're long in reſpect of Viſible ſplendor and Prevalency be ſet on the top of every Mountain, to fulfil thoſe Prophecies*, Iſa. 2. 2, 3. Mic. 4. 1, 2. Zech. 8. 20, 21, 22. When many People ſhall

ſay, Come let us go up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of *Jacob*, &c. *Which intends the mighty and chearful gathering and aſſembling that ſhould be in the laſt days, unto a Viſible Church ſtate and Communion in the Faith and Order of the Goſpel*; *then* will the Lord aſſemble her that halteth, and gather her that is driven out, and her that he hath afflicted, *and then he ſaith*, he will make her that halteth [*thoſe who are not rightly inſtructed in the Order of the Goſpel*] *a Remnant* [i. e. *of living Stones to be built up on the Corner ſtone in the building of* Zion] *and* her that was caſt far off [*by Antichriſtian corruptions*] a ſtrong Nation, and the Lord ſhall reign over them in Mount *Zion* from henceforth and for ever. In this Glory ſhall the Lord appear when he buildeth up *Zion*, Pſal. 102. 16. *And by Gods preſent Providences, ſeemingly unfolding ancient Prophecies*, he is now ariſing to have Mercy on *Zion, the time* [*of the end of one thouſand two hundred and ſixty days of her Deſolation, and therefore*] *to favour her being come, yea the ſet time*, ver. 13. *and no leſs ſeeming to* be coming out of his place to puniſh the inhabitants of the Earth, *Iſa.* 26. 21. *For all their cruel Perſecution, and helliſh Idolatry, to deſtroy* Babylon *that hath waſted her, and the Children of* Edom [*Proteſtant Perſecutors of the* Egyptian *rate*] *that*

have

have ſo long been crying aloud to Babylon, *and the Antichriſtian Powers againſt the inward court worſhippers,* Race it, race it even to the Foundation, *Pſal.* 137. *The building of this* Zion *will be gradual* [for a Nation cannot be born in one day, *this Royal Nation*] *by the accompliſhment of the great Prophecies, by wonderful and great Providences, and thoſe of two ſorts, in breaking, ſcattering, and overthrowing the Antichriſtian Powers,* the Feet and Toes of Iron and Clay, and in ſetting up a Kingdom of Saints which ſhall not be left to another People. *The Inchoation of which hath been already by Preaching the Everlaſting Goſpel, the auſpicious augmentation and growth, will be in gathering the Saints into a Viſible Church-ſtate; Churches ſhall be multiplyed and mightily encreaſed, as of old,* Act. 2. & 9. 21. *To haſten this great and expected Glory, what can we do leſs than contribute by our Prayers and faithful endeavours, to the appearance thereof? and who that loves the Lord Jeſus and his glorious appearance can do leſs than to come to our* great Corner-ſtone, *as* living ſtones *that they may* be built up an Holy Temple in the Lord, *and thereto be edified in all holineſs, ſerving him therein Day and Night? And that this may appear to be the duty of every one profeſſing Faith,* viz. *to joyn himſelf in fellowſhip with a particular Church Viſible is all that I in-*

tend to do at this time, as a brief Preface to this ſhort Treatiſe.

1. *It was the practice of Believers in the Primitive times,* Act. 2. 41. *They that were converted to the Faith of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by gladly receiving the Word of Promiſe,* ver. 38. 39. were added *unto* the Church *to the number of three thouſand Souls. And it's moſt evident that their believing, of it ſelf made them not Members of the Church, for the Text is expreſs in it, that they firſt believed, and then by another Act of their own and the Churches, receiving them, they were added to them that were before in fellowſhip,* [*the hundred and twenty,*] *and became Church Members, as it follows,* ver. 47. And the Lord added to the Church daily ſuch as ſhould be ſaved. *i. e. Such as were in a State of Salvation by believing. The Lord is ſaid to add them by his Grace, that wrought effectually upon their Hearts to believe, and believing enclined them alſo to joyn themſelves unto the Lord in Church fellowſhip. On the judicial proceeding of Chriſt by the Mouth of* Peter *againſt two Hypocrites that had joyned themſelves and were diſcovered,* Act. 5. 13. That of the Reſt [*i. e. of the ſame ſort*] durſt none to joyn himſelf; (Ananias *and* Sapphira *having been made ſo eminent Examples*) but the people magnified them, *i. e. the Church and the Apoſtles,* ver. 14. And

Believers

Believers [*i. e. ſincere-hearted*] were the more added unto the Lord, Multitudes both of Men and Women. *So that as ſoon as they believed they looked upon it, as their next duty to joyn themſelves to a Goſpel Church. Likewiſe ſee the ſame Practice by the Apoſtle* Paul *as ſoon as he was converted,* Act. 9. 26, 27, 28. *There is alſo another eminent inſtance at* Antioch, *where the Diſciples were firſt called Chriſtians, they that were converted by the ſcattered Diſciples at* Sauls *Perſecution, were exhorted by* Barnabas, *Act.* 11. 23. *To joyn together in Church fellowſhip, for it's ſaid,* when he came, [*being ſent for that end by the Church at* Jeruſalem] and had ſeen the Grace of God *in theſe converted ones,* he was glad, and exhorted them all that with purpoſe or readineſs of Heart, they would joyn unto the Lord. *i. e. In Church fellowſhip, for theſe phraſes of joyning and adding unto the Lord, do expreſs* adding or joyning *to the Church, becauſe the Church is the Lords, and joyned unto him by a viſible* Covenant; *and every one that joyns to the* Church *doth primarily and profeſſedly joyn themſelves to the Lord in* Church Communion. *And the immediate declared event of this Exhortation of* Barnabas *was, that they joyned to the Lord in* Church *fellowſhip, and became a* Church, ver. 26. *See alſo* Act. 16. 5.

2. *It appears to be the duty of every Belie-*

ver to joyn himself to a particular Church, from the Nature of Conversion; it is the turning the whole man unto God, in all the ways and appointments of Christ wherein he is to be found; but Church fellowship is a Divine Institution where God is to be found, joyned with, and submitted unto, as is abundantly manifest from the currant of the Old and New Testament. This seems to be the meaning of the Apostle when he doth beseech the Romans, ch. 12. 1. by the Mercies of God to present their Bodies, [*i. e. their Persons*] *to give up their Persons by presenting them to, or before the Lord* [viz. *in Church Communion*] *a living Sacrifice* [*of thanksgiving*] *Holy and Acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable worship,* [λογικὴν λατρείαν] *it should be rendred, your word service, or worship; the word is used for the Word of God,* 1 Pet. 2. *Or a service of Words,* As new born babes desire, τὸ λογικὸν ἄδολον γαλα, the sincere Word, the Milk, or Milk of Word. *So that the Exhortation of the Apostle seems to be made to Believers to devote and dedicate themselves unto the Lord in Church fellowship by a Covenant or Obligation of Words, being called their service of Words,* viz. *their explicate word, the Presentment or Devotement of themselves unto the Lord, according to* Hos. 14. 2. *This Dedication or Devotement is lively signified in Baptism, wherein every Believer doth federally*

derally oblige himſelf, to Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, and thereby doth both bind himſelf to joyn unto the Lord in profeſſed Subjection to all his Ordinances, and doth ſhew it, Sign and Seal it before the Lord. And every adult one that profeſſeth himſelf baptized, and doth not actually joyn himſelf unto the Lord in Church fellowſhip, doth practically deny his Baptiſmal Dedication, wherein he is devoted to be a living, i. e. *viſible lively Sacrifice of thanksgiving in his Perſon, and all his performances unto the Lord.*

3. *That Believer that joyns not himſelf in Church Society falls ſhort of many great ends of his profeſſed high, and holy Vocation; for we are called according to Gods purpoſe of Grace to be a* choice Generation, a Royal Prieſthood, a People, εἰς περιποίησιν, i. e. for a peculiarity, *i. e. unto God for his* ſpecial viſible ſervice, to offer up Spiritual Sacrifices, *of a true Goſpel Nature, acceptable unto God through Jeſus* Chriſt, ver. 5. *Wherein the* Virtues of Chriſt are ſhewed *forth or declared,* ver. 9. *Not only perceived in our ſelves, but ſhewed forth in Practice and Profeſſion, and this is, or can be no way ſo much as in Goſpel inſtituted worſhip, wherein a Believer comes unto, and is built up in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt as* a living Stone. *The great reaſon of ſquaring a ſtone is, to be laid in the building, as*

the

the end of ſquaring the Stones in Mount Lebanon *was to lay them in* Solomons Temple, *a Type of a Viſible Goſpel Church. Such I doubt not but the Holy Ghoſt means by the Apoſtle* Peter, *ſaying, Ye as lively Stones are built a ſpiritual Houſe,* ver. 5. *and ſo the Apoſtle* Paul, *Eph.* 2. 20, 21.

'*Again the Lord Jeſus doth declaredly deſign that Believers ſhould be* viſibly ſeparated *from the World, to come out in the way of Goſpel Communion from all unclean things and Perſons,* 2 Cor. 6. 14, 15, 16, 17. *From all Heatheniſh, Antichriſtian, or falſe unwarranted worſhip, and from Communion with profeſſed Unbelievers, and enter into a ſolemn* explicite Covenant *with the Lord; without doing of which they anſwer not the end of their calling in Chriſt. Laſtly our Calling is not only to be the Lords ſingly, but* conjunctly *with the Saints and redeemed ones, to a myſtical Relation to Chriſt, in a Community of the Elect and called ones, which is anſwered by us, as in our inward and ſpiritual, ſo by our external and viſible joyning our ſelves to the Society of the faithful, to ſerve the Lord in one Body with them; for we are called to the* Peace *of God that rules in our Hearts,* in one body, *Col.* 3. 15. i. e. *with other Saints and Believers, and therefore are to* walk worthy, *as it* becometh *this vocation,*

tion, not only as to Moral *Duties but* inſtituted worſhip, *Eph.* 4. 1. &c. *Phil.* 1. 26. Let your Converſation be as it becometh *the Goſpel of Chriſt; and this in our Order* and ſtedfaſtneſs of our Faith in Chriſt, *Col.* 2. 5.

4. *There are Duties to be performed by every Believer, by Virtue of his Relation to Chriſt as ſuch, which cannot be done but in a way of Church Communion; for he is obliged to obſerve what* ever Chriſt hath commanded, *Mat.* 28. 20. *And how great things hath Chriſt required to be obſerved in a way of Church Communion? as the exerciſe of* Brotherly love, *Heb.* 13. 1. 1 *Joh.* 3. 11. *And he there refers to our Saviours expreſs command,* Joh. 13. 34. *The Obedience to which lyes in the ſenſible Expreſſion thereof, as it appears by what follows,* Hereby ſhall all men know that ye are my Diſciples, if ye have love one for another, *i. e. In outward viſible acts. And the Apoſtle ſpeaks of the* Communion of Love, fellowſhip of the Spirit, Bowels of Mercy, ſameneſs of Mind, *&c.* Phil. 2. 1, 2, 3. *Love is a Grace that gives Life to all acts of Communion, it flouriſheth and branches it ſelf in the moſt lively manner in a Society, and Societies are for the ſake of it. Deſtroy love, and not only the ends, but the very bond and Life of a Society*

ciety comes to nothing. There are great commands of Christ that we are not capable of obeying him in but in Church Communion: As frequent assembling together, provoking one another to love and good works, *Heb.* 10. 24. *The remembrance of the Lords Death frequently in the Lords Supper. And this is to be observed in a Body or Society of Believers. See* 1 Cor. 10. 16, 17. *I might instance also in all Duties that concern brotherly watch, Pastoral watch, each Officers duties by their respective places, and Members to them; all Discipline actively or passively considered, Christs Church Institution, Ordinances and Statutes are those which are principally intended by* David, Psal. 119. *And such were those that* Zechary *and* Elizabeth *walked in, blameleß,* Luk. 1. 6.

5. *Every one that supposeth himself in a state of Grace should use all endeavours required by Christ, and means instituted by him for growth in Grace. Now that Church fellowship and Ordinances are instituted by Christ for growth in Grace, I think no sound Christian will go about to deny. Believers are exhorted, or commanded to* grow in Grace, 2 Pet. 3. 18. *And that Churches, and their Officers and Ordinances are appointed for that end, which we are to abide stedfast in the use of, is manifest, from* Eph. 4. 14, 15.

4. 14, 15. *compared with the* Primitive *practice,* Act. 2. 42. ch. 9. 5. *See alſo* Eph. 2. 19.

6. *All that profeſs themſelves to be tranſlated into the Kingdom of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt ſhould walk as profeſſed Subjects thereof; and this they cannot do but in Communion with a viſible Church, for particular Churches are the viſible parts of Chriſts Kingdom. Here Chriſt rules as King, Lawgiver, and appears as High prieſt and Prophet, giving forth himſelf to the Faith of his People with all his fullneſs of Grace in Goſpel Ordinances and Diſpenſations. Here then it is that a Believer doth exalt the Lord Jeſus Chriſt moſt eminently as to viſibility, in his regal Power; and therefore ſo long as a Believer joyns not himſelf to a particular Church, he ſtays in the Verge of Satans Kingdom, expoſeth himſelf at no ſmall rate, to his Temptations, Rage and Tyranny; and falls ſhort of one great end of his Faith in the Salvation of his Soul, which is to be a profeſſed Subject of Chriſts Kingdom, deals diſloyally with Chriſt, inſtead of promoting, prejudiceth the Intereſt of Chriſt both in reſpect of himſelf and others in the World, he may be a* Nicodemus *like Friend of Chriſt; but why doeth he not profeſſedly and openly practice Obedience to all the Laws and Ordinances of his Houſe, and bear witneſs*

thereto?

thereto? Is it not a tacite and implicite denying of Chriſt? and will not Chriſt take it ſo? and mens talking of Chriſts Kingdom is but a vain ſhew, *unleſs they do him this particular perſonal ſervice, as to joyn themſelves actually and viſibly to a Church of Chriſt; therein eſpouſing his Intereſt in giving up their Names unto him, and walking in his Name, as* Micah 4.5. All people will walk every one in the Name of his God, and we will walk in the Name of the Lord our God for ever and ever.

Objections that are made againſt this practice are very inconſiderable, and ſhould bear little weight in a Mind truely enlightned; ſome of which are anſwered in the enſuing diſcourſe, others I ſhould here remove, if there were room for it. I think the Naming them is the ſhaming of them, to all men that have learned Chriſt, and taſted that the Lord is Gracious. 1. The ſcorn and reproach men ſhall fall under from the prophane World. *I think no wiſe man will be laugh't out of his Eſtate, how much leſs out of his Religion and Souls Salvation?* 2. A Suſpicion leſt they ſhould come under too ſtrict tyes and bonds to Holy and Religious Converſation. *Read* 1 Pet. 1. 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19. 3. Others are kept off, by prejudices ariſen by reaſon of the ſins

and

and failings of Churches and Church-Members. *But will wiſe men refuſe a good Calling or Eſtate becauſe there are ſo many abuſe them? And name a Church or Chriſtian without failings, and conſiderable ones. It is your duty to chooſe the pureſt Society, and you are at your Liberty to do it where you may have moſt Comfort and Edification. Laſtly, Many are hindred from their ignorance, or miſled apprehenſions concerning the Nature of a Goſpel Church. For their Information and Rectification, eſpecially, I have publiſhed this Chriſtian Conference, that was in my hands, and that it may obtain the deſired end, is the ſincere wiſh and prayer of an unworthy Servant of Chriſt,*

Iſa. Chauncy.

This Conference is managed by Mr. *Cornelius Philomathes* a Countrey Gentleman, and Mr. *Peter Chriſtophilus* a Miniſter, Neighbour to him.

THE

The Introduction.

Chriſtophilus. Mr. *Philomathes*, I am heartily glad to ſee you; methinks you are mightily enjoying your ſelf in your pleaſant and retired walks; will not my company diſturb your meditations?

Philomathes. I take it kindly, Sir, you are pleaſed to give me a Viſit, for indeed, I live ſomewhat lonely, I am glad of good company, eſpecially ſometimes for divertiſement, but there is no friend more welcome than your ſelf to me, becauſe your chearfulneſs revives me, and your diſcourſe profits me.

Chriſtoph. Dear Sir, I deſerve not ſo great a character and commendation, it is your generous diſpoſition that leads you to ſpeak theſe things, for you know we uſe to differ pretty much in many things, eſpecially in matters of Religion, and in diſcourſe ſeemingly hot opponents of each other, but I think never the worſe Friends.

Phil. Sir, I have, ſo near as I know my own heart, a moſt cordial love to every one that fears God, though he be not in every

thing of my mind; but for you, Sir, I have more than an ordinary reſpect and eſteem, as having been my old acquaintance, and intimate friend and neighbour in all the late Changes in Church and ſtate, for above theſe forty years we never had any laſting difference, but for the moſt part a very friendly correſpondence.

Chriſt. And to your great honour, with a grateful remembrance, may I often rehearſe to the praiſe and glory of God, the marvelous Chriſtian kindneſs and commiſeration that you ſhewed to me, and my wife and family in our late Perſecutions, that you often ſheltered me from the rage of my enemies; and when they haled me to Priſon, and plundered all my goods, that my Wife and Children had not Beds to lie on, Victuals to eat, nor Veſſels to dreſs any thing in left, you were pleaſed to take them into your houſe, and provide plentifully for them; and this you did when you were in a capacity to have done us more hurt than they who did it, and ran no ſmall hazard from time to time in not doing it.

Phil. No, no, I hope God will keep me from a perſecuting ſpirit; I bleſs his name he hath kept me from it hitherto, and it is a change in our Nation much to be admired, that we have ſuch a day of Liberty as we have,

have, that all good men may live quietly and peaceably one by another, and ſerve God according to their Conſciences.

Chriſt. Ay Sir, eſpecially if we conſider the ſtupendous circumſtances of Providence theſe few laſt years paſt, that hath wrought about matters to effect that which we ſo long prayed and waited for.

Phil. But my friend, I muſt whiſper a word in your ear, things are not right yet.

Chriſt. No, no, nor will not be yet, as they ſhall be, but bleſſed be God they are ſo well as they are, and that God is going on ſo faſt in the way of his Providence towards finiſhing his Myſtery.

Phil. I ſee you are on your Prophetick hints ſtill, I muſt confeſs my ſelf here *Aſinus ad lyram*, for the darkneſs of Prophecies, and the diſagreement of Interpreters, and Events refuting ſo many that have been very confident, hath quite diſcouraged me, that as I look not into them my ſelf, ſo I give little heed to what others ſay, for all men will abound in their own ſenſe; and a man may be ſaved whether he be right or wrong in thoſe things.

Chriſt. Well Sir, then we'll let thoſe things alone, I would not introduce any ungrateful diſcourſe, but would rather enter upon ſomething more ſuitable to your genius.

Phil. Say you ſo? I will be ſo bold with you then, as to ſtart ſome matter for our diſcourſe, which may be of uſe to me, and it is that which I have been juſt now meditating on, when walking by my ſelf, and I can't tell what is the matter with me (there may be ſomething of God in it) my mind for ſome months ſince hath been much running on ſuch things: My Friend, I am thinking about a Church of Chriſt, whether or no Chriſt inſtituted any? or whether there be any Viſible Church but what is eſtabliſhed by the Laws of Men? our Parſon ſtands very ſtifly on this latter Opinion, and truly to give him his due (though a while ago he ſeemed a little of a Perſecuting ſpirit, which I always chid him for) he is a learned man, a good Divine, an eloquent Preacher, and indeed an indifferent good liver, unleſs now and then in ſome company he may drink a glaſs of Wine too much, which a good man may do. Indeed he was upon this Point *Sunday* laſt, and I am thinking he did not give ſufficient Scripture ground to prove what he ſaid.

Chriſt. Sir, I am not a little ſtartled at this humour of yours; you know how often you have been moved to great paſſion upon my ſtarting Diſputes upon that Point, and that you looked upon things of this nature (how clearly ſoever proved from Scripture) to

have

have as little certainty in them as you do the Interpretation of Prophecies now.

Phil. It's too true indeed what you ſay of me, and I thank you for it, but *Nemo mortalium omnibus horis ſapit*; it may be God is fixing my heart to a more ſerious and impartial conſideration of theſe things, from which two things hindered me. 1. A rooted prejudice took in from the Univerſity, and daily company, eſpecially with them of the Gown of both ſorts againſt theſe things. 2. Worldly Intereſt; I did not dare to ſuffer my mind and conſcience to be overcome by the light of ſome Truths, leſt they ſhould ſo far prevail as to prejudice my Eſtate and Reputation among the leading men of the times; I ſhall ſpeak two words, which ſhall introduce you with chearfulneſs into this diſcourſe. 1. In our former converſes about theſe things, although I uſually (as you know the manner is for diſcourſe ſake) gave you much oppoſition, yet there were many Arguments which you uſed pinched me very hard, and although I ſeemed to blow them off with little regard, yet they ſtuck in my mind afterward, and now recur with no ſmall evidence and demonſtration, eſpecially ſuch as flowed ſo clearly from Scripture, as I know there were many: tho' I made as if I would not ſee it. And I have had a great veneration

for Scripture, and I have often thought that it muſt be the ſtandard for our Religion, whatever men ſay, elſe we muſt turn Papiſts or Mahometans. And there was one place among the reſt which you preſſed upon me for ſtrictneſs of walking according to Goſpel Rules in the ſervice of Chriſt, *Joh.* 15.14. *Ye are my friends if ye do whatever I command you.* From this place I have had many checks of conſcience in reading over the Books of the New Teſtament (in the courſe I obſerve in my family) ſeeing ſo many things commanded by Chriſt, which I take no regard to, eſpecially in Goſpel Inſtituted Worſhip, and I have thought that ſure Chriſt commands Believers much more than meer *Morality*, which made me to queſtion my true friendſhip to Chriſt, and that I was not carried forth in the practice of that little Religion which I pretend to, from a right principle, but from carnal, and did but what a meer prudential moral man might do; *viz.* to attain to a little ſeeming *negative Holineſs*; and ſeeing upon examination I find the fruit no better, I queſtion the goodneſs of the Tree. Indeed I pleaſed my ſelf that I was not of a perſecuting ſpirit, and now I find this came from the natural conſtitution God hath given me; I was always of a compaſſionate nature, hating cruelty. Likewiſe I took up from the

the Goſpel a Moral Rule, to do as I would be done by; now in all this I find there was nothing but nature, and meer morality, not any thing of grace; here now I finding my ſelf meerly natural, I ſee the reaſon why all the myſteries of faith and order (the commands of God in the Goſpel) were meer fooliſhneſs to me. And I manifeſted a love to you and others of your perſwaſion, becauſe you were always the faireſt and honeſteſt ſort of men to deal with, except here and there an Hypocritical knave. Such will be found among the ſtricteſt Profeſſors in this world: though I often had my mouth ſtopped when your inveterate Enemies condemned all, and your very Religion it ſelf for your ſakes. Beſides, I did love you, becauſe I ſaw you good Commonwealths men, & for the moſt part aſſerted our Civil Liberties, as well as Spiritual. And laſtly, as I may tell you, I had no little condemnation in my conſcience by obſerving the converſation of ſome of you, and looked upon it as ſome kind of expiation for my extravagancies and compliances, and ſo a palliate cure of my ſtinging conſcience to ſhew as much countenance to you as could well ſtand with my circumſtances. And I was willing to have a general reputation among all Parties for a good honeſt prudent Gentleman of a religious inclination, though differ-

ing in ſome ſmaller matters, and ſometimes carried away by a ſort of men to thoſe practices I approved not of, but could not well avoid; and you know I was never no ſwearer, nor did ever care for healths, and ſeldom out of the way by a glaſs of Wine more than ordinary.

Chriſt. Sir, I am ſure now you ſpeak like a very honeſt Gentleman indeed; I have often heard your diſcourſe with delight, but never with ſo much complacency as now, you have by this got my very heart, for I hope you are through grace raiſed to a better ſavour and truer reliſh of ſpiritual things than ever I perceived in you.

Phil. I wiſh that be true, God grant that through his rich grace it may be ſo. I will add a word more concerning my ſtate in grace by and by, but let me firſt mention the other thing to induce you to proceed in anſwering my deſire, and it is this; I am now willing candidly to enquire into your way of Worſhip, that which you call Goſpel Order, and to lay aſide all wrangling diſputes and prejudices, and take things calmly, and with a ſincere impartial attention, that ſo I may have the cleareſt information that may be of the true mind and will of Chriſt; for now I ſee it is to no purpoſe to ſerve Chriſt in a way that he never revealed or appointed;

pointed; ſuch ſervices I am convinced are neither acceptable to him, nor profitable to us: therefore our gracious and wiſe Lord tells the corrupt worſhippers of his day, *In vain do ye worſhip me, teaching for Doctrine the commandments of men.* I was much ſtartled at that Text once by an able Preacher (ſlipping in a ſtrange place into a Conventicle where no body knew me) who did open and apply that place notably; I wiſhed in my mind ſome of my acquaintance had heard him, but that was not a day for ſuch as I and them to be ſeen at a Conventicle.

Chriſt. Sir, I ſhall now moſt gladly comply with you in the command you lay upon me, but I pray Sir, how came you ſo in love with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt? you may remember how in your familiar diſcourſes with me at your Table, you would take occaſion a little merrily to deſcant upon my name, and ſay, it was a marvelous Puritanick name, ſure thy Father was a great Puritan, Browniſt, or Anabaptiſt.

Phil. Sir, I remember it very well, and I am convinced I did very ill in it to jeſt with ſpiritual things, for I find now I had as good have joked on the name Chriſtian, for indeed he is not worthy of that name who is not a friend of Chriſt, and ſuch I deſire to be, and hope through the free grace of God I ſhall be

be for ever hereafter; and oh that through the Word of God, and the effectual operation of his Spirit, I may be made wiſe unto ſalvation, and then my name will not only be *Philomathes*, but *Polumathes*!

Chriſt. Amen; It is my hearty deſire and prayer to God for you *that you may be ſaved*, and always hath been ſince I knew you; but I pray how came you all of a ſudden to be ſo great a friend unto Chriſt, as I hear you now profeſs, to my unſpeakable rejoycing?

Phil. On a ſudden! no, no, man, it is not on a ſudden; God hath been longer dealing with my heart than you, or any one hath known of, though you hear of it but now. It would be too long to acquaint you with the dealings of God with me, the many convictions of conſcience that I have wreſtled with, and at laſt through the prevailing power of Sin and Satan, palliated with ſome Religion, or ſtifled with merry companions, or by reſolutely caſting off convictions: from reading the Word, from hearing it, from the good Education my good Parents gave me (for indeed to tell you the truth, they were Puritans, and I, the Lord forgive me, an Apoſtate wretch from the Principles I was inſtructed in: however all was palliated under the name and carriage of a prudential man) convictions from the converſation of good men,

men, from the ſins of prophane ones, that I was often an eye and ear-witneſs: of convictions, from the preaching of our Parſon that preached againſt ſome ſins that he was too too much guilty of. I was convinced it was my duty *to do as he ſaid, not as he did*; but all this while I was in the gall of bitterneſs, and the bond of iniquity, whatever I or others thought of me, for I knew not Chriſt, and taſted no true ſavour of him: I had ſomething of a form of godlineſs, but no power; my Religion, ſuch as it was, was a meer ſlavery to me; the world, and the luſts of my own heart kept me a ſlave to the Devil.

Chriſt. When do you think thoſe bonds began firſt to be broken, and how?

Phil. Truly it was by the Word of God; for when I conſidered ſome places of Scripture, ſuch as *Rom.* 10. 17. *faith comes by hearing, &c.* & *Jam.* 1.18. *Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth*; it wrought upon me to look out a little (in my prudential way) after good Preaching, that I might find the gates of Wiſdom. And I would hear ſome of the ableſt men of our Church, eſpecially when I went to *London*, and truly I heard many notable diſcourſes for Eloquence and Learning, and they ſeemed for to make a great jingle in my imagination for the preſent, but no impreſſion on my heart, that remained

remained very lean ſtill. And the main ſubſtance of their diſcourſes was uſually to cry up our Church for the pureſt in the world, and natural Religion, and the power of the natural man's free will to the imbracing the things of God, the Doctrine of *Non-Reſiſtance*, and *Paſſive Obedience*; and in the hearing of thoſe Doctrines, I was ſo far from profiting, that my heart told me ſtill while I heard, that I ſufficiently knew by mine own experience that they preached Lies, and that they cauſed the people to err, ſuch as are ſpoken of, *Jer.* 14.14. & 23. 25,26,32. *Ezek.* 13. 8, 9. & 16. 29. & 22. 28. I pitied the poor Souls that ſate conſtantly under ſuch teaching, and reſolved to give them off, and betake my ſelf to Conventicles; but my covetous heart, in love ſtill with the world, was too hard for me, for there was danger yet in it; whereupon I talked with ſome Whigs that were not ſo ſtrait-lac'd, but that they would hear good Preaching in the Church, and Common-prayer too, if need were, but would ſhake their heads, and make great complaint of the Publick Miniſtry. In brief, I find they were ſick of my diſeaſe, though I liked them the better for it then; they told me of a man or two which the Whigs that had been affrighted from Conventicles had ſmelt out, and went to hear, but they are

(ſay

(ſay ſome) reckoned but Phanaticks in a Maſk; the true Sons of the Church hate them with a perfect hatred; quoth I, it's no matter for that, I will hear them what they ſay, if it pleaſe God: Indeed I was ſo diſſatisfied in the preaching of ſome of their *London* Dons, that I had rather hear our Country Doctor, which I look upon as more orthodox, and was juſt reſolving to leave the Church, and venter it at the Conventicles: No, ſay my honeſt Latitudinarian Whigs (as true Blues for the Peoples Civil Rights as any in the world, but ſince I find them meer bogglers at the Intereſt of Chriſt; and there are ſome N. C. Divines that give large meaſures to their conſciences too, but no more of that) don't do any thing raſhly; conſider, you have a plentiful Eſtate, God be thanked, and you have a Wife and many Children, it becomes you to mind the main chance; theſe are but Punctilio's of difference between the Church of *England*, and the *Diſſenters*, the great danger is of Popery, let's all combine againſt that, and not let Proteſtants break one another by theſe ſmall Indifferences. We confeſs we are troubled at this Devil of Perſecution that is broke out in the Church, but we think too they are a ſort of imprudent raſh People, that will be caſt into Priſons, and ruine their Eſtates

and

and Family's for non-compliance in indifferent things, in which cauſe we believe they could not juſtifie themſelves to die. There are many things indeed ſhould be rectified in our Church; but you know our Articles are very ſound, and as for the Prayers and Ceremony's, they are as our firſt Reformers and Martyrs left them. Theſe things being ſpoken at a noted Coffee-houſe for Whiggs, took much impreſſion upon me, and fix'd me with more Reſolution to adhere to the Church; for I knew they were old Profeſſors, and as cunning Shifters, as I was, or I could be in matters of Religion. I thought my ſelf now but a fool to them, ſeeing they had ſtudied and practiſed this Point ſo thorowly; and condemned a narrow throated Conſcience for one of the worſt things in the World for a Wiſe man, it was fit only for Religious fools. But I told them if I did keep my Church, I would hear ſome or other that preached Salvation by Jeſus Chriſt, and if I found ſuch an one I would go near to move my Family, and come up to *London*, ſo I took my leave and went away, paying my Diſh.

Chriſt. And did you go to hear the man or men they directed you to?

Phil. Yea, I'le warrant you, and with a greedy appetite; and there was a great crowd

crowd of Whiggs, many of which I knew when they would not have gone to Church for a great deal, *ſed tempora mutantur & nos*, &c.

Chriſt. And what was the Subject he was upon?

Phil. Eph. 2. 1. *And you hath he quickned who were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*, &c. He inſiſted on the dead ſtate of the Natural man, ſhew'd how all the Imagination of his Heart was evil; he could not of himſelf do any good, *Rom.* 3. 12. and backed his Doctrine with ſo many full and plain places of Scripture, that my mouth was fully ſtopped and my Heart became guilty before God. I ſaid with my ſelf, Bleſſed be God, I hope ſome men in the Church have got the cue of the Goſpel. I hope all have not abdicated the thirty nine Articles from their Pulpits. I went in the Afternoon to hear a man much commended too, and he was on that Text, *Mat.* 16. 26. *What will it profit a man*, &c. And he deſcribed the excellency and worth of a mans Soul ſo well, ſhewing nothing could be a valuable ranſom for it but Chriſt; and decried the world at ſuch a rate, eſpecially when it comes in competition with the Eternal welfare of the Soul; that my two great bulwarks were battered down in a manner in one day, and Chriſt even

ready

ready to take poſſeſſion. I ſaw now I was but a poor undone, wretched, wicked, condemned creature, and that I had hitherto ſold my Soul to preſerve my Eſtate. Whereupon I retired my ſelf to my Lodging, and ſpent much time in Prayers and Tears, and reſolved now if God would give me ſtrength, I would ſlip into a Conventicle, which accordingly I did next Sunday, where I heard a very awakening diſcourſe upon, *Gal.* 3. 10. *As many as are of the Works of the Law, are under the Curſe.* Whereby I underſtood the deſperate Condition I was in, in Relation to the Law, which he opened exceeding well, *Whereby the Law came, Sin revived, and I died*, Rom. 7. After this I made a ſhift to get into a place where I heard a worthy man preach very lively and clearly on *Act.* 16 31. whence he opened the Nature of Faith, and ſhewed how it ſaved, *viz.* Inſtrumentally by cloſing with, and laying hold upon the Lord Jeſus Chriſt for Juſtification and Sanctification, and how Chriſt was made Sin for us, and bare the Curſe: After this I began to ſavour the preaching of Jeſus Chriſt, and found my Soul more refreſhed with one of theſe Sermons, than with an hundred others. I heard alſo from *Acts* 4. 12. *There is no other Name under Heaven given, whereby we can*

be

be ſaved, and from *Heb.* 7. 25. *He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt all them that come*, &c. from Joh. 14. 6. *I am the Way, the Truth*, &c. It would be endleſs to acquaint you with the precious diſcourſes, that I have ſince heard in *London* when I came up, eſpecially from the time of Liberty; and what warmth of Love was wrought in me to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, with ſome meaſure I truſt of a true and lively Faith, that through the ſtrength of Free-grace I hope I ſhall be a *Chriſtophilus* now all my days, but I muſt tell you one thing, that the Devil is a Conventicler too, as well as a Son of the Church, for I ſee many very looſe perſons there for hearers, and not a little falſe Doctrine deliver'd in many of them.

Chriſt. Theſe things always have and will be; as for prophane hearers, I diſlike not that, for there is then the more matter for a converting Miniſtry to work upon; and as for falſe teachers, they were many in the Apoſtles time, as *Paul* and *Peter* tell us in their Epiſtles. This ſhould not diſcourage you; *But be faithful to the Death, and you ſhall have a Crown of Life*, *Rev.* 2. 10.

Phil. I hope by the help of God I ſhall, but I will tell you there is one difficulty, I cannot get over yet, and that is this; I have heard you ſay, it's the Duty of a Believer,

to follow Christ fully, to deny himself and take up his Cross, and to add or joyn himself to some Church; which I have not done any otherwise than to partake sometimes with the Church of *England*, and sometimes at a Meeting; which I am much dissatisfied in, for many weighty reasons not to be now insisted on. That which keeps me at this day is my great Ignorance of, and Estrangedness to the order of the Gospel, I being not fully satisfied whether Christ hath instituted any Stated Gospel Church, and if he hath, where among all your different perswasions in matters of worship it is to be found. I wish you would be pleased to give me the clearest account you are able in brief of your perswasion and practice in these matters.

Christ. Sir, I shall chearfully endeavour it, but that things may be more clear and plain to your understanding, I pray make your enquiries of the points you would be resolved in, and your objections as they occur.

CHAP.

Chap. I. *Of the Church Catholick.*

CASE II.

Phil. I Pray Sir, what doth the word Church import?

Chriſt. Church or Kirk is but an abreviation of κυριακὸν; according to the proper idioms of Languages Engliſh and Scotch, it ſignifies the Houſe of God; and hence our places of publick aſſembling are called Churches in Conformity to the *Jews* of old, who called the Temple, the Houſe of God, according to which Chriſt ſpeaks, *Mat.* 21. 13. there being a Levitical Holineſs aſcribed to it, which Holineſs of places hath ceaſed with it, and the Goſpel Church is made only of living ſtones, *Heb.* 3. 8. 1 *Pet.* 2. 4. though when we in *England* ſpeak of a place for publick aſſembly, we call it a Church, not that any wiſe Proteſtants do take it ſo, in a proper ſence, but Metonymically only; as for others they think and ſpeak after the Papiſts.

Phil. What do the Greek and Hebrew words import?

Chriſt. They always ſignifie an Aſſembly or Congregation, there was two words uſed for it in the old Teſtament עדה and קהל

both ſignifie *Cœtus* or *Congregatio*, מועד is from יעד *condixit*, ſo that it's taken for the ſolemn aſſembly gathered together at Gods appointed time, or for the aſſembly at the appointed place, *viz.* the Tabernacle, and therefore the Tabernacle of the Congregation, which Congregation was the Church of old, *Act.* 7. 38. *Eccleſia* in the New Teſtament is taken for any aſſembly, though rude and riotous, *Act.* 19. 32. [ἐκκλησία is not uſed, *v.* 37. where our Interpreters uſe our Engliſh word, ἱεροσύλους ought to be rendred robbers of Temples,] Heathenish and Jewiſh, but it is moſtly uſed for, and appropriated to a ſacred aſſembly, as *Mat* 18.17. *Act.* 2. 47. *Ch.* 8.1. *Ch.* 11. 26. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. &c.

Phil. What do you ſay then is a Church of Chriſt in the moſt comprehenſive ſence?

Chriſt. A Church of Chriſt is a Congregation of Saints aſſociated in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, *Eph.* 3. 21. *In the Church in Chriſt Jeſus.*

Phil. Why do you ſay aſſociated?

Chriſt. Becauſe a Church is not a tranſient and occaſional Congregation but fixed, and a joyned Society by Union and Communion with Chriſt and one another, 1 *John* 1. 3. and becauſe the Saints are the members of Chriſt, and he is the Head, they are ſaid to be gathered together always in Chriſt Jeſus really,

ly, or profeſſedly, they are gathered unto him by way of inſertion, myſtically, or Politically, they are gathered together in his Name or Authority.

Phil. Then a Church comes under various conſiderations?

Chriſt. Yes, Sir, it doth, but the Church of Chriſt is properly but one, as he is the one Head and only ſo, the Body is but one, 1 *Cor.* 12. 12. *For as the Body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the one Body, being many, are one body, ſo alſo is Chriſt*, i. e. Myſtical.

Phil. I pray be as diſtinct as you can upon the ſeveral conſiderations of this one Church of Chriſt?

Chriſt. I will, you know the moſt comprehenſive conſideration of the Church of Chriſt is under the name of Catholick, and there are two Articles in the Creed called the Apoſtles, that expreſs our Faith therein; 1. *I believe the Holy Catholick Church*; 2. *I believe the Communion of Saints*, which two words *Holy* and *Saints* denote the Matter and Form of this Church, that it is Saints in Chriſt Jeſus, it is a Holy Church made up of Saints; and then that it is comprehenſive of all Saints. And laſtly, That the formal nature of this Church conſiſts in a certain Union and Communion, for the latter always implys the former.

Phil. But is there not particular Churches? do you not call every ſingle Congregation a Church?

Chriſt. Yes, we do ſo; but that you may have the right and diſtinct notion of it, we muſt duly weigh the Catholick Church as to its Relation, to Chriſt its Head. The Catholick Church is to be conſidered as to its myſtical, and political ſtanding in Chriſt. In reſpect of its myſtical ſtanding theſe things belong unto it; 1. That it is the general aſſembly or collection of real Saints, *Heb.* 12. 23. ye are come, Πανηγύρει καὶ ἐκκλησίᾳ πρωτοτόκων to the Catholick aſſembly and Church or *Congregation of firſt born, whoſe names are written in Heaven.* This is the Heavenly Church to which he ſaith Believers in the Goſpel days are come, to which Church, Jeſus the Mediator of the New Covenant is the *Head of influence*, and to which all Saints as ſuch are ſpiritually knit, and with whom they have Communion, and in him one with another. 2. The Church in this ſence is it, which Chriſt hath purchaſed, and are effectually partakers of all his benefits, *Eph.* 5.25,26,27. to it belongs, *Election, Redemption, Effectual Vocation, Juſtification, Adoption, Sanctification, and Glorification*, John 17. 9, 10, 11. Rom. 8. 29,30. 3. Here in this reſpect the Church is ſaid to be Catholick in relation to indivi-

dual

dual Saints only, it's not Catholick as a *genus* comprehending many ſpecies of Churches, but as a *totum integrale* comprizing many parts, and all have a coordinate ſtanding in ſubordination only to Chriſt their Head; yea they all conduce to the making up of Chriſt Myſtical one body, being members in particular. 4. This Myſtical Body is to be conſidered according to its manner of exiſting (*ſecundum modum exiſtendi*) and that two ways. 1. In its Militant State or Standing, or in its Triumphant, *in Viâ* or *in Patriâ*. In its Militant State it comprehends all the true believers in the world exiſting at the ſame time, whether they are viſible by profeſſing or not, the complement whereof are all the Saints actually glorified, or the Spirits of juſt men made perfect. And this diſtinction is only of the Church, in reſpect of the different ſtate in the enjoyment of Chriſt in the way of Communion, in Grace and Glory; the difference is only gradual, and no more, the Union is the ſame. 2. It is to be conſidered in its Inviſible and Viſible ſtanding. The Church's Inviſible ſtanding is wholly in reſpect of that inward ſpiritual Relation, which the Saints have to Chriſt, and one another. Its Viſible ſtanding is in profeſſing Saints that are real members of Jeſus Chriſt.

Phil. I Pray Sir, give a right underſtanding

of the Church in its relation to Christ as a Political Head.

Christ. Thus Christ is to be considered as King and Law-giver to his Church and People, and he governs his Church either immediately by his ruling Spirit in the heart of every Member of his Body, whereby they are influenced, *Eph.*4.4. *There is one Spirit, one Body, one Lord, &c.* Or he governs mediately as a Politick Head, and that is only so far as the Church is visible and professing, and as such he hath given Immunities, Laws, Officers, Ordinances, for establishment of Visible Polities, Societies, or spiritual Corporations. And here we are to observe diligently these things; 1. That under this consideration the Catholick Church is most large and extensive, for it compreliends all credible Professors, though not real, and all actual Church-Members, though secret Hypocrites, *Ephes.* 3.15. *Of him the whole family is named in Heaven and in Earth, i.e.* real and professing. 2. That the Church, so far as it's capable of Visible Communion and Fellowship, is the subject of Christ's mediate Political Rule and Government, and that is only in particular Congregations, to them he hath given his Word, Ordinances and Officers, and to no other, for he suited them to particular Societies, neither hath he substituted any Officers

Officers or Ordinances to the meer myſtical ſtanding of the Church. 3. All the Inſtituted External Worſhip, though it be given to the Church in its viſible ſtanding, which it hath in particular Churches, yet it is for the ſake of the Myſtical Body, for the edifying and building it up by the Means of Grace, *Eph.* 4. 12, 13 and for the multiplying it by calling in the Elect. 4 In this ſenſe and acceptation as the Catholick Church being a Political Body of all Saints myſtically and immediately under Chriſt their Head; ſo this Political Body ſhews it ſelf, and becomes viſible in ſome particular parts thereof only, which are called Viſible Churches, and are under a mediate Rule and Government of Chriſt, and in this reſpect the Catholick Church comprehends particular Churches as ſome diſtinct parts and parcels thereof.

Phil. Then I ſuppoſe your apprehenſions are, that there is a Catholick Viſible Church, which is the next and immediate ſubject of all Officers and Ordinances.

Chriſt. Miſtake me not, I have not ſaid ſo as yet; I ſay the Catholick Church becomes in part viſible in particular Congregations and they are the immediate ſubjects of viſible Ordinances and Officers, which are inſtituted and placed therein for the edification of the Myſtical Body of Chriſt.

Phil.

Phil. But is not the universality of Saints Militant the Catholick Visible Church of Christ on Earth?

Christ. The universality of Saints on Earth doth not constitute a Church in a visible standing; for many are Believers that as yet make not themselves visible by profession. 2. They are not, nor can be bound together in visible Union and Communion. That which makes a Catholick Church is a Catholick Bond of Union and Catholick Communion, which is only mystical and invisible; but there is not, nor cannot be a Catholick visible Bond; for as they cannot appear in one visible Congregation, so they cannot be bound to walk together in Fellowship, nor can have visible Communion as one Church in the same individual Administration, if they profess the same Faith, preach the same Word, pray alike, *&c.* yet this makes not one particular Church. 3. If there be a Catholick Visible Church, then it must have Catholick Visible Officers, every Officer must relate to the whole Church; every ordinary Officer must be Officer to the whole Catholick Visible Church, and there had need be a Visible *Pastor Pastorum* over them all. 4. All Visible Members of the Catholick Church are not therefore Members of any Visible Church with Ordinances; for

for they muſt be ſuppoſed to be Members of the Catholick Church, before they can be made Members of a Viſible Church with Ordinances. 5. A Viſible Church is Organized with Officers to the whole Church, and not to a part of it: A Paſtor, Elder, Deacon, are Officers to the whole; and who will ſay a Deacon hath as much power in all the Churches on Earth, as in the Church to which he is conſtituted? he may as well ſay ſo, as ſay a Paſtor hath. 6. If Chriſt inſtituted a Catholick Viſible Church, it was under the Old Teſtament, or under the New, but he did neither, for there was but one Particular Congregation under the Old, and Chriſt left but one when he aſcended.

Chap. II. *Of a Particular Church.*

Phil. I Pray Sir come now to the main thing I aim at, *viz.* to the true nature and conſtitution of a Goſpel Particular Church.

Chriſt. You mean ſuch a Congregation as is the immediate ſubject of all the Ordinances and Offices of Chriſt's Inſtitution, where every Believer is bound to wait upon God in Goſpel Faith and Order, for the glory of Chriſt, and his own edification.

Phil.

Phil. Such a Church I mean; may not a National Church be it?

Chriſt. By no means; it's no Church but ſuch whoſe Members may all meet together in one place for Communion in all Ordinances, for ſo the firſt Church at *Jeruſalem* did, the greateſt for ought I know that ever was ſince, and all other that we read of in Scripture ſince. If any comprized all the Saints in the Nation, Province or Territory, they all aſſembled for frequent Communion in one place under the ſame Officers. We read of no Particular Church in Scripture but what was Congregational; for the National Church of the Jews, which was the only one of that kind which ever was in the World of God's Inſtitution, was Congregational; for all the Males came to the Temple, and before, to the Tabernacle three times a year, to appear before God to worſhip in acts of Communion, therefore it was called the Tabernacle of the Congregation.

Phil. I am pretty well ſatisfied now from the weighty arguments I formerly heard from you, though my thoughts through prejudice paſſed lightly over them then, that all National, Dioceſan and Parochial conſtitution of Churches was merely from Man, if not from the Man of Sin, which latter I ſee cauſe enough to ſuſpect. But I pray, give me

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a plain deſcription of a particular Goſpel Church.

Chriſt. With all my heart Sir, *a Particuler Goſpel Church is a ſeparate company* of Viſible Believers with their Seed (or Saints) aſſociated together in ſpecial bond of Union for the enjoyment of Communion with Chriſt and one another in all the Ordinances of Chriſts appointment for their edification.

Phil. You ſay the allowed matter of this Church is Viſible Believers; what underſtand you by a viſible Believer?

Chriſt. I mean one that makes a credible profeſſion, ſuch an one as I am bound by all the rules of Charity to believe he is a true believer on the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; and I do not ſay, 1. That it is neceſſary that therefore he be no Hypocrite for ſo he may be and I not know it. 2. Neither do I ſay that his meer profeſſing makes him a Church member, for they in *Act.* 2. believed before they were Church Members and profeſſed their Faith, which gave them right of claim. Yea there are many have right of claim, and do profeſs, but do not ſeek to joyn to a particular Church, and it cannot be without a voluntary offer, and ſubjection to the Order of the Goſpel.

Phil. What is required to a credible profeſſion for the due ſatisfaction of a particular Church of Chriſt?

Chriſt.

Chriſt. The Tree cannot be known to me but by the Fruits, ſee *Mat.* 7. 17, 18, 19. *chap.* 12. 33. *Luk.* 6. 44. the credible fruits are therefore, Holineſs of life, and profeſſion of Faith. It's required there be viſible holineſs of life, *Phil.* 1. 27. *Let your converſation be as becometh the Goſpel, i. e.* both the Doctrine and Order of it: And this lies in negative and poſitive holineſs appearing in the converſation. 1. Negative that it be without blame, *Eph.* 1. 4. *Phil.* 2. 15. 1 *Th.* 5. 23. 2. A meer negative religion in reſpect of groſſer and more obſervable ſins is no more than what many a Carnal man may attain unto; there muſt be the practice of poſitive duties required, and not merely moral in juſtice and mercy, but ſuch by which a Chriſtian is more peculiarly diſtinguiſhed from Moral Heathens, ſuch as family duties of reading the word, and daily prayer: thoſe of a more publick nature, as conſtant attendance on the word Preached, ſanctifying the Lords day, free diſtribution to the neceſſities of the Saints, and a manifeſt readineſs on all occaſions, to follow Chriſt as his diſciple in all things, *Tit.* 3. 8. *ch.* 2. 11, 12. yea in ſuffering.

Phil. But what more profeſſion is needfull beſides this viſible practical walking? is not this enough of it ſelf?

Chriſt.

Chriſt. It is as the Church ſhall judge of it, for they may be ſo well acquainted with the Faith, as well as the viſible holineſs of ſome, that there may not be the leaſt doubt that the perſon offering himſelf, is fit matter for the Spiritual building, but the Church will it may be for the edification of others deſire to hear the dealings of God with ſuch an one, rather than for ſatisfaction concerning his Spiritual ſtate, which they doubt not of.

Phil. But I pray Sir, what is the nature of this verbal profeſſion which you expect?

Chriſt. There are two things beſides what hath been ſaid requiſite in an adult Church Member. 1. That he have a competent knowledge of God and Chriſt, *Prov.* 19. 2. He that hath not the knowledge of Chriſt cannot believe, *Rom.* 10. 14. *ch.* 3. 11. *Pro.* 9. 10. *Hoſ.* 4. 6. 2 *Pet.* 1. 3. 1 *Tim.* 2. 4. therefore it's requiſite that ſuch as are admitted Church Members, do ſhew that they have a knowledge of God in his eſſence and ſubſiſtences, the perſon, natures and offices of Chriſt, the ſtate of man by reaſon of the fall, the nature of Chriſts Mediatory Office in his Humiliation and Exaltation, and the great effects thereof in Juſtification, Sanctification and Glorification.

Phil. I think indeed it's very requiſite, that Church Members ſhould have knowledge of

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Divine Myſteries, ſo far as is neceſſary to Salvation, or elſe they will but prophane holy things, and turn them into meer ſuperſtition or Idolatry, as the Papiſts have done, who hugg Ignorance as the Mother of Devotion, but many a man that hath had good Chriſtian education may give a great account in theſe matters and not have a Grain of Grace in his Heart.

Chriſt. So he may, nay many an one that can diſcourſe with much knowledge in all points of Divinity may be a very looſe and wicked man in his life, *Rom.* 2. 17, 18, 19, 20, &c. nay, he may do all externals in Religion, and have no power of Godlineſs. Wherefore, 2. We go as far as we can to be ſatisfied, and therefore inquire a reaſon of his Faith and Hope, which when he hath ſatisfied us in, we can go no further, but own him fit to become a viſible Member of the Church. And theſe qualifications are expreſly laid before us, *Rom.* 10. 10. The *reaſon of the Faith* that is in us is to be given when required, 1 *Pet.* 3. 15. *be ready to give a reaſon of the hope that is in you,* It is therefore of the greateſt weight to give this reaſon to a Church, for their ſatisfaction when asked by it, and we find that they that were added to the Church, *Act.* 2. gave good evidence of their Repentance and Faith in the Lord

Lord Jesus Christ, as the effects of *Peter's* Sermon.

Phil. But they were presently added to the Church, they allotted no time to make further inspection into their lives and conversations.

Christ. There may be great reason for it, for, 1. It's most probable these were all known to be very devout in the Jewish Religion, such it may be for conversation, as *Zechary* and *Elizabeth*; and as *Cornelius* a Proselyte, for they were Jews that lived at a distance, in remoter Regions, that came up constantly to Worship at the Feasts, and now came to the Feast of [redacted]. 2. *Peter* and the rest of the twelve, all presided in the Church, who were extraordinarily inspired, and therefore had a more infallible judgment, or more infallible dictates of the Spirit to direct them in Church administrations, than ordinary Church Officers since have, as appears by many instances in the matter of *Simon Magus*, *Ananias* and *Sapphira*. &c. but we are acquainted by the Spirit of God how true steps they made in receiving of Members, that they were still such as should be saved; we read not of any false-hearted of all that 3000, unless *Ananias* and *Sapphira* were of that number.

Phil. But is it absolutely necessary, that

every adult perſon be admitted into Church Communion, and give credible evidence that he is a Member of Chriſt.

Chriſt. Yes, for 1. Viſible Memberſhip of the Catholick Church, gives right of claim to Communion with a particular Viſible Church, a ſuppoſal of a perſons myſtical union to Chriſt, is the true ground of claim of Communion with Chriſt and his People, in inſtituted Ordinances. 2. We have no other ſort of Members but viſible Saints ſpoken of, as admitted, in the primitive Apoſtolick ſtate of the Churches, *Rom.* 1. 7. 1 *Cor.* 1. 2. *Phil.* 1. 1. *Eph.* 1. 1. *Col.* 1. 2. *Saints and faithful Brethren in* [illegible] *Theſ.* 1. 1. *Eph.* 2. 1, 2. thoſe of the Church of *Theſſalonica* were *in God the Father and in Chriſt Jeſus.* In *Solomon's* Temple, all the Stones were to be ſquared and fitted, before laid, a Type of Chriſt Myſtical and Politick in viſible Church-ſtate; the Apoſtle *Peter* alludes to it, 1 *Pet.* 2. 2. 3, 5. he ſhews the firſt effects of the Word of God's grace on Converts, and then they come to Chriſt the corner-ſtone, as living ſtones to be built a ſpiritual houſe in viſible Communion of the Saints. 2. That a Church-Member who ought to be caſt out when in, is not to be received in; but if any ſurreptitiouſly crope in, & be made manifeſt not to have the fear of God before his eyes,

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he is to be caſt out; therefore, he that doth not appear to have the fear of God, is not to be admitted a Church-Member. See 1 *Cor.* 5. 11, 12.

Phil. Your ſtrictneſs in this kind keeps off many that would otherwiſe joyn themſelves.

Chriſt. And doth not the holineſs of Goſpel-Truths as much or more keep off carnal and wicked men from embracing them, as they will ſay? but the true reaſon is their rebellious hearts bigotted to their beloved ſins. Beſides, it's very neceſſary there ſhould be a bar to keep off unworthy perſons from ſacred things; *It is not meet to give holy things* (*i. e.* ſuch as are peculiar to God's Children) *unto Dogs*, and ſuch are Church-Priviledges. 3. We would not willingly debar one, even the leaſt Babe in Chriſt, from the appointed ways and means of Communion with Chriſt, and therefore do willingly condeſcend to the modeſty and weakneſs of any Age or Sex manifeſting a ſpiritual hunger and thirſt after the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; if there be a ground to judge there is truth of grace in the heart, it is accepted, and this is ordinarily perceived by them that are ſpiritual.

Phil. But you will ask hard Queſtions in the points of Knowledge.

Chriſt. No harder than are asked in our ordinary Catechiſms which we teach our

Children, trying only whether a grown Perſon underſtands in any competent meaſure what he ſaith, according as *Philip* dealt with the Eunuch.

Phil. But this giving a reaſon of the hope that is in us, is that which moſt are againſt, and are loath to comply with.

Chriſt. They that have it not cannot do it, unleſs ſome glozing Hypocrite, that by his Education and Parts hath got much brain-knowledge, and can counterfeit any external part of Religion. But where this hope is you uſually ſee how ready men are to ſpeak of the Grace of God to Friend and Neighbour, why not to a Church or its Officers, that may bring their Relation to the Church? You ſee how naturally in our diſcourſe, but now, you fell into this; when I took but occaſion to ask how you came ſo ſuddenly in love with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, you gave me a very full account of the Grace of God towards your Soul.

Phil. Why is it no more than ſuch a poor account as I gave you but now? alas I could have ſaid a great deal more concerning Gods wonderful gracious dealings with me, but that I haſted to this diſcourſe with you about Goſpel Church and Order, which I have long wiſhed for. I had thought your members muſt have prepared ſome ſet ſpeech in ſuch exact form

form and manner as ſome men can do. But alas how many good honeſt Chriſtians cannot expreſs themſelves? but they can tell you in their plain way of ſpeaking, what they were, Drunkards, Lyars, Scoffers, Debauched Adulterers, Blaſphemers, *&c.* And one will ſay, God caſt me down under the ſence of ſin, by awakening my Conſcience. by ſuch a Word or ſuch a Providence, and I began to think how I was in haſtning to eternal deſtruction, he will tell of the great ſtruglings he had with Satan, the World, and his Company, to hold him faſt in his ſinful ways, he will tell you what good tidings to him the Revelation of the Free Grace and Love of God to Sinners was. And how thereby his Heart was drawn forth to Faith in his blood and obedience to all his commands, he will tell you the Sermon, and places of Scripture, ſome at leaſt of the moſt remarkable, which were made moſt effectual for his Souls benefit and advantage. If this be all you ſtand upon, I think none that hath taſted that the Lord is gracious, will make any ſcruple of it. As for my own part I could be willing to make it my frequent diſcourſe to any faithful Friend in Chriſt, to declare to him, what God hath done for my Soul, and ſhould look upon it as the beſt entertainment he could give me to hear the like from him. And I

know not why any one ſhould queſtion the doing it to a Church of Chriſt, where ſo many faithful ones labour under the ſence of their own ſins and weakneſſes, as well as a mans ſelf.

Chriſt. I find baſhfulneſs is a great hindrance to many, in ſome, eſpecially Women, it is from their Sex, and the natural temper of many of both Sex; there is no remedy for them but to pray againſt it: and for Church Officers to deal with them in all Tenderneſs and Condeſcention, ſuppoſing ſtill that there is much of the Grace of God, and ſence of Sin in them, which is not expreſſed by what ſhews it ſelf. Again, others are aſhamed, ſome upon this account, *viz.* to tell the World how wicked and vile they have been, others afraid they ſhall be rejected, and that would be a great diſgrace to them. As to the firſt ſort, I ſay, Churches do not ſtand upon this, that every one ſhould particularize the individual Sin, that he hath committed, it may be ſome of an heinous and enormous nature; it is enough that he ſpecifies the ſence of the greatneſs of the ſins he lived in, in General, unleſs he finds it for the honour of God, and the good of others, to declare what a wicked wretch in this or that kind he hath been, which the world and his acquaintance knows as well as he; and in that reſpect it is neceſ-

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ſary for the honour of God, and *Paul* did ſo, that great Apoſtle, I was a Perſecutor, &c. And how often doth he aggravate his ſin, and magnifie the rich Grace of God that called and ſaved him? That great notorious ſin of his known to all, he *declares often* to the Churches and others. Then as to the declaring our Faith in the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and in his great and precious Promiſes, there is no reaſon any ſhould be aſhamed of it, unleſs a man be aſhamed the World ſhould know he is willing to be ſaved, and not eternally periſh. *Rom.* 10.10, 11. The Apoſtle anticipates this Objection, when he ſaith with the Heart man Believes, and with the Tongue Confeſſion, (*i.e.* of that Faith) is made unto Salvation, it immediately follows, for the Scripture ſaith, *He that believeth on him ſhall not be aſhamed*, i.e. To confeſs with his Mouth what he believeth in his Heart. As for Confeſſion of particular ſecret ſins, it is not expected by the Churches, they have no ſuch cuſtom to require it, but leave it to the wicked practice of the Romiſh Prieſts in Auricular Confeſſion.

Phil. You have given very good ſatisfaction in this point, for I have heard many that are not acquainted with the way of your Churches object this very ſtrenuouſly; as if your Miniſters took upon them the practice

of those Wicked Varlets, who make Confession a stratagem to creep into acquaintance with mens secrets, for their own advantage. But I would have you answer the other objection that many are afraid they shall be rejected, and I will tell you too many are loath to bewray their own ignorance and unacquaintedness with the things of God.

Christ. As for such, who fear they shall be rejected, they are of two sorts. 1. Such as are lifted up in themselves, and put on Religion more for the applause of it than for the love of it; these have not learned Christ, for they know not how to deny themselves; and therefore it's better they stay off than offer themselves, till their Hearts be enclined to love Christ, and his commands more than the applause of men. And these have usually one of these reasons for their fears; first, Either that they have lived in some known scandalous sins, that they cannot give any sufficient grounds to others, to believe, they have thorowly repented of by a manifest Reformation, and such had better forbear offering themselves, till their Friends and Acquaintance observe some evident change in them. Or it is by reason they fear, as you say, they shall bewray their Ignorance in the things of God; if that be the reason, it is much better for them to discover their Ignorance

norance than to remain in it, being the enquiries upon this account into mens Knowledge, it is only in the great and weighty points of the Gospel, without acquaintance with which a man cannot believe unto Salvation by Jesus Christ. Besides what danger is there of publick disgrace? If the way of the Churches be known, no unprejudiced Christian can think there is any, for if a man offer himself to joyn to a particular Congregation, he goeth to the Pastor or Elder, and acquaints him with his desire, who will, if he think there be reason, first enquire of his knowledge in some great fundamental points, wherein finding him grosly defective, he gives him Information, and desires him frequently to repair to him for the more cherishing all good desires and affections in him, till he arrive at a competency of knowledg; but all this while doth not make him known to the Church, so that his infirmities are not blazoned abroad in the World in the least by this way of proceeding.

Phil. My Friend, I pray inform me what you intend by a separate Society; and can you justifie separation? you know how it's cryed out against by most learned Divines.

Ch. Therefore I put in that word, because I am sure Separation is a necessary adjunct that doth belong to every true Constituted Church

Church of Christ, nay is there any that doth pretend to be a Church of Christ, that doth not ſeparate more or leſs? doth not the pretended Church of *Rome* ſeparate from *Turks* and mere *Pagans?* doth not our Church of *England* ſeparate from *Rome?* and why? Either becauſe ſome ſay it's no true Church; others becauſe it's corrupted in Doctrine and Worſhip, though a true Church, and thereby juſtifie their ſeparation from it. And may not other Churches upon the ſame ground ſeparate from the Church of *England*, either becauſe, as ſome will ſay, it's not a true conſtituted Goſpel Church, but Antichriſtian. or becauſe, as others will ſay, they allow it to be a Church of Chriſt, but polluted in Doctrine, Worſhip, Manners, both as to the Miniſtry and People, and therefore to be ſeparated from, for the enjoyment of a purer Church State and Communion? Again, the Church of *England* in her Catechiſm teacheth ſeparation, and ſolemnly vows it, Infants in Baptiſm, Promiſe by the Sureties or Vangers, to forſake the World, the Fleſh, and the Devil. What is this but ſeparation? And if this were practiſed as it is promiſed, the members of the Church of *England* would be a ſeparate people. Laſtly there is nothing clearer than that a viſible Church of Chriſt ought to be ſeparate, 1 *Pet.* 2. 9. What is a choice

peculiar

peculiar people, a holy Nation, to ſhew forth the praiſes of him that hath called us out of darkneſs into his marvellous light, but a ſeparate people? a *Holy Nation in a world lying in* wickedneſs? a people called out of a dark world into *marvellous light*, as the Church of old in *Goſhen* had marvellous light while *Egypt* was in darkneſs, and the praiſes of Chriſt thus ſeparating themſelves, they ſhew forth in the Churches. And what can be oppoſed with any evidence againſt that plain and full place to this purpoſe? 2 *Cor.* 6. 14. *be not unequally-yoaked together with unbelievers*, ver. 15. *what part hath he that believeth with an unbeliever? i. e.* a viſible unbeliever; it ought not to be rendered an Infidel, as if one ſort of unbeliever only was meant, for it's the ſame Word every where elſe, and *v.* 14. rendred unbeliever; but our Engliſh Divines render the word Infidel, inſinuating that none but *Turks* and *Pagans* were to be underſtood by this Text, that we are required to ſeparate from. But the Text is moſt expreſs that it is from all viſible Unbelievers. The *Temple of God is* the Goſpel Church, the fellowſhip is Church fellowſhip, therefore he bids us come out from among Unbelievers, and from all falſe worſhip, and *be ſeparate*, *v.* 17. and then God Promiſeth to be their God, to dwell with them, *&c.* I ſhall add no more at preſent on

this

this point though much more might be ſaid.

Phil. You have fully confirmed me in this point, I pray tell me whether there be any that are not actual believers that are Church-members.

Chriſt. All Church members come in upon the right of a Viſible Profeſſion, but it follows not thence that all Church-members are actual believers; for many Hypocrites come in upon the right of Profeſſion, but are not actual believers. Again, Infants and Children of believing Parents come into Churches, and are juſtly made and called members upon the right of Profeſſion; but it is of their Parents, not of their own Perſonal Profeſſion, neither are they actual Believers; their Profeſſion is in the Parents, their Covenant Obligation is in the Parents, the Priviledges they are capable of is belonging to them by virtue of a Promiſe, wherein they are concerned with their Parents, and primarily for the Confirmation of the Parents Faith, and ſecondarily in order to the Salvation of their Children. But a little more of this when I come to Baptiſm.

Phil. I pray Sir, proceed then to ſpeak to the Viſible bond whereby this Church Society is bound together.

Chriſt. I hinted before that Churches are denominated from their bond of Union, as from their

their Communion; from Myſtical Union and Communion, the Church is called Inviſible, from Viſible Union and Communion it is that Churches are called Viſible. It's thus in any civil Corporation and Society, every man doth not come and partake of the Priviledges of it at his pleaſure, and leave it when he pleaſe, no not every one of ſuch a Profeſſion qualified according to the Laws of the Society, none but ſuch as being qualified comes and lays claim to his admiſſion on his qualifications wherein to be approved he puts himſelf upon the Teſt, being approved he immediately enters into a mutual bond or obligation, he promiſeth by Oath or otherwiſe to ſubmit to the Laws of the Society, they admit him a member to partake of all the Priviledges. So it is in Viſible Churches which are ſo many particular Societies that have given up themſelves to Chriſt, and bound themſelves to walk together in a viſible ſubmiſſionto,& conſtant waiting upon Jeſus Chriſt in all his Goſpel Inſtitutions and Appointments, and it's requiſite this obligation be explicite; becauſe, firſt, The Church Society is viſible and explicite, ſuch therefore muſt the bond be. 2. The Profeſſion of his Faith is explicite, ſuch therefore ſhould his obligation be to future walking. 3. As no man can be a member of any Society conſtituted by voluntary

luntary conſent, without he voluntarily offer himſelf, ſo none is governable there by the Laws of it, without ſuch an obligation, and otherwiſe the Government of it would be wholly precarious; for a man cannot be a ſubject duely (unleſs a man be a ſlave and under compulſion) to any ſociety but by natural (as a Child to a Family) or voluntary ſubmiſſion and obligation, as here. 1. All ſocieties of this nature do juſtly expect and demand that a Man be true to them, and ſubmit to their Laws, if he will have protection, and partake of their Priviledges.

Phil. But they ſay you have no Scripture grounds for this Bond or Church Covenant as ſome call it.

Chriſt. It might be enough to ſay, that a ſociety muſt be encreaſed the ſame way, as it is made at firſt, and that after Members muſt be joyned upon the ſame terms, on which the firſt embodied and aſſociated together, but there is no incorporate ſociety but joyn together at firſt by mutual agreements, under ſome Charter, for enjoyment of ſome priviledges, and ſubmit to the preſcribed Laws thereof, and on theſe terms are Members, and capable of being judged by it; ſo it is here, Chriſtians meet and agree together, to walk in Church fellowſhip, and what do they promiſe ſolemnly to God

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and one another, to give up themſelves to the Lord and one another, to walk in all the ways, ordinances and appointments of Chriſt. Now I find this is that which is called adding to the Lord, when a people firſt joyn themſelves to Chriſt in Church fellowſhip; and ſo the firſt gathering the Church at *Antioch* is expreſſed, for *Act.* 11. 19. ſome ſcattered upon the perſecution by *Saul*, men of *Cyprus* and *Cyrene*, I doubt not but Prophets inſpired at *Pentecoſt*, Preached to the Grecian Jews the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, *v.* 20. and the hand of the Lord was with them, *and a great number turned unto the Lord*, *v.* 21. Upon the tidings of this ſucceſs *Barnabas* was ſent from *Jeruſalem*, who was a good man and full of the Holy Ghoſt, and of Faith. *And much People were added to the Lord*, i. e. they by mutual conſent, gave up themſelves unto the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, they turned to the the Lord by Repentance, by the Preaching of theſe firſt comers. But now the Spirit tells us the ſucceſs of *Barnabas* his coming, and it was upon his exhortation of them thereto, *v.* 23. and when he was come *and ſaw the Grace of God*, (which had prevail'd unto converſion) *he rejoyced, and exhorts them all with full purpoſe of Heart* [*i. e.* with ſincerity and reſolution] προσμένειν τῳ κυρίῳ, *to joyn themſelves for conſtancy unto the Lord*, in Church fellowſhip,

ſhip, afterward when *Paul* comes, *v.* 26. he finds them a Church, and as ſuch abides among them for an whole year, for it's *ſaid* Paul *and* Barnabas *aſſembled themſelves with the Church,* ἐν τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ *Preaching to a great multitude,* many of which were not yet of the Church, and that this adding or joyning to the Lord is entring into the Church obligation, is manifeſt alſo from *Act.* 5. where it appears upon the ſignal Judgments, that *Ananias* and *Sapphira* fell under, *v.* 13. *of the reſt* ſuch Hypocrites as they, none durſt joyn themſelves; the word is κολλᾶσθαι ſignifying to cement and unite into a Body, it's uſed for *joyning to the Church of Jeruſalem,* Act. 9. 26. and 1 *Cor.* 6. 17. in the ſame ſence. And it's ſaid here, *v.* 14. Believers *were the more added to the Lord,* which muſt be by ſome viſible overt act, whereby they became Members of the Church after believing, for it cannot be meant of their myſtical joyning to Chriſt by believing; for then the Antitheſis would not hold between them that durſt not and them that did. In the ſame ſence is the adding a Member to a Church, which is joyned to the Lord, *Act.* 2. 41, 47. there they were firſt viſible Believers, then added to a ſociety by ſome overt ſolemn act, and therefore ſaid to be added to the Church. It would be too long in this

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way of conference between you and me, to evince this Truth particularly from the method that God uſed, in the conſtituting and maintaining a viſible Church, from the beginning: to look back but as far as *Abraham*, how he, and his family, and his ſeed became a Viſible Church, it was by explicite obligations, and overt acts in binding them by Sacrifice. I might mention the ſeveral expreſs obligations that Church came under from time to time, in *Moſes* time at *Horeb*, *Joſhua*'s, the Judges, *Samuel*'s, eſpecially, *David*'s, and the reſt of the Reforming Kings, remarkably by *Joſiah*, and after the Captivity in *Ezra*'s and *Nehemiah*'s days. And that this was not a diſpenſation peculiar only to the Old Teſtament State, and ſtanding of the Church is manifeſt from *Iſa.* 56. 3, 4, 5, 6. for there God ſpeaks of the priviledges of the Goſpel Salvation, which was near, meaning the Gentile, by the Son of the ſtranger, and by the Eunuch, any other excluded from the priviledges of the Church of the Jews, and incapacitated by Levitical uncleanneſs; theſe, ſaith the Lord, being Believers, and *joyning themſelves to the Lord* (the words uſed in the acts) *and taking hold of his Covenant, ſhall have a place and a name in my houſe*, i. e. to be Church Members, and have right to all Church Priviledges. And this is that bond of

the Covenant which the Prophet *Ezekiel* foretells, that the Great and Goſpel reſtauration of the Jews ſhould bring them under, *Ezek.* 20. 37. of which the Prophet *Jeremiah*, *chap.* 50. 4, 5, 6. and *Zech.* 2. 10, 11. I refer you in this matter to that clear diſcourſe that the Learned Mr. J. *Cotton*, hath upon this ſubject in his way of the Churches of *N.E. Pag* 59,60,61,&c. where you may receive full ſatisfaction in this point, if what I have briefly ſpoken be not enough. You may read alſo Mr. J. *Davenport's* power of Congregational Churches his anſwer to Mr. J. *Paget*, where he ſhews *pag.* 27. that this Covenant obligation, is the formal cauſe of a Church, and ſheweth the nature, and evinceth the neceſſity of it to a Churches being; as likewiſe Mr. *Hookers* ſurvey, *chap.* 4. *page* 45.

Phil. Sir, I thank you for diſcovering theſe authors to me; I have heard of them that they were Reverend, Pious & Learned Men, who ſuffered much for the Teſtimony they bore againſt our corruptions, prejudice for a long time hath kept me off from reading the works of ſuch men; but I pray Sir, give the heads of the Arguments they inſiſt on for it.

Chr. 1. Believers are under Church power this way, or *quatenus* Believers; If *quatenus* profeſſing Believers, then where ever they come,

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the Church and Officers there, may challenge power over them as Members; this will be denied by moſt till they voluntarily ſubmit themſelves, it may be ſome will come for Church priviledges, but will not admit of any Church power for their Reformation to be adminiſtred towards them. 2. They argue from all Civil Societies of that nature, and Marriage it ſelf cannot have a formal being without mutual compact and agreement, ſo there is a mutual relation that all Church Members ſtand in one to another, and all of them to their Officers, and their Officers to them, and reciprocal duties to be performed; theſe cannot be performed, or will not without mutual conſent and obligation. 3. They argue from all the Metaphors whereby a Church is deſcribed a Houſe and Temple, is bound and pin'd together, a natural body hath all the Members knit together by joints and bands, it's repreſented as a City compact, *Rev.* 11. 2. *Eph.* 2. 19. and what City can become enfranchiſed, but this way and manner. 4. It's no reaſon any ſhould challenge priviledges of a Society without they be ſubject to the orders and rules of walking. 5. If this be not, but Members may come in and out as they pleaſe, without obligation, Churches have no power to keep themſelves pure by Admiſſion or Excommunication,

for as a Member can come at pleasure, so he may depart. 6. Lastly the practice of the Primitive Churches seems very clear, as hath been touched, but suppose it had not been so clearly expressed I know not but if God institutes a Society or other thing, what ever is necessarily required to the very nature & essence of the thing without which it would inevitably be destroyed, ought to be done, the general rule in such cases ought to lead us to the practice of duty in all those particulars, that must necessarily attend obedience thereunto.

Phil. But if this bond of visible obligation be the formal Cause of a Church, then there is no true Churches but such where it is; which seems to be hard.

Christ. How far the Lord Jesus Christ will own a people professing themselves a Church, and how far he will dispense with their failures and defects in matter of order, especially while it hath been in the Antichristian Wilderness, he himself only knows. Much hath been done by Christ undoubtedly in the latter times of that great Apostacy in the days of Reformation, and that he hath had his true Churches all along, it's not to be questioned, but that for the most part was in a mystical, not a visible organical standing; and in many congregations, where the Word

and Sacraments have in ſome meaſure of purity been adminiſtred, in reſpect of the matter of the Congregation, viſible Saints, and the manner of adminiſtration freed from Romiſh Pollutions and humane Inventions, we will not deny but there may have been a true, though not right regulated Church of Chriſt, without this expreſs and ſolemn obligation, it is implicit, and ſuch as is to be ſuppoſed as intended by their practice, in attending, and conſtant waiting upon God in all the Ordinances of his appointment, in one aſſembly or congregation, eſpecially in that great Ordinance of Communion in the Lords Supper, wherein they ſeal their union in one body. 1*Cor.*10 17. And undoubtedly a people that is congregated having explicitely choſen their Paſtor, or implicitely ſubjected to him, and received this Sacred Ordinance from his hands, are bound to abide, as a ſociety mutually related one to another, in conſtant and frequent Communion by the nature of the Ordinance it ſelf. But the coming of a Church thus together, 1. Is far ſhort of the order of the Goſpel. 2. The generality of communicants of this ſort, do not apprehend themſelves hereby bound to one Congregation more than another, and their Miniſters look not upon themſelves bound to one People more than another: any more than for external

emolument, taking themselves to be Ministers to the Catholick Church, and so may administer the Sacrament to as many people as they Preach to, here or there, without designing a peculiar flock to take charge of. So that their Churches are occasional most times, and but for a while, during their pleasure to administer to them. 3. Such a Congregation is not at all governable, though as to priviledges, so called, they take and leave as they please; yet for their disorders, miscarriages and sins, they think themselves not accountable to any. And so liable to no censure, and therefore though we would go as far as possible in allowing the Right Hand of fellowship, to professing Protestant Congregations; yet we cannot do to all promiscuously, but may undoubtedly use the judgment of discretion therein, so as we be careful we do not by our practices in this and other cases, nullify the appointed order of our Lord Jesus Christ, and pollute our Communions.

Phil. I pray what is the manner of a Peoples first entring into a Church State?

Christ. I will tell you the usual manner of them in *N. E.* and other places, who have chosen to practise most agreeably to Gospel order, when a competent number of professing Believers living within a vicinity, desire to

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joyn together in a Church State, having good knowledge one of another, and having solemnly fought God together for help and direction in this weighty matter, they appoint a day for it, and acquaint Churches with it, that their Paſtors or Meſſengers, or as many of other Churches as pleaſe may be preſent at the time. After ſpending ſome part of the day in ſuch ſolemn duties, as concern the matter in Hand, they do declare the dealings of God with their Souls one after another, then or before, one being choſen by the conſent of all to preſide for order ſake this day, it may be ſome Brother upon whom they have their Eye for a Paſtor, he then declares in the name of all there now intending to aſſociate, naming each of them, (at which they are ſtanding) the ſpeaker addreſſing himſelf to the Paſtors and Meſſengers of other Churches preſent, after this or the like manner. Brethren, you are Witneſſes of that great and ſolemn obligation that we are entring into; that we may have a name and a place within the Walls of the Houſe of God together with you, and may have but the Honour to be reckoned one of the leaſt of the Tribes of *Iſrael*. *We therefore here upon mature conſideration, and chearfully, do give up our ſelves (with Children) to the Lord Jeſus and one another, promiſing in the ſtrength of the Lord,*

to ſubject our ſelves to all the Commands and Inſtitutions of Chriſt in the Goſpel, and continue ſtedfaſtly in fellowſhip one with another, to the Glory of him that hath called us, and our mutual comfort and edification, and do accordingly receive each other in the Lord, and cleave to each other in Brotherly love and mutual ſubjection according to God. Theſe words, whether more or leſs to the ſame purpoſe, may be uſed only to *declare* their *profeſſed ſubjection to the Goſpel of Chriſt in Faith and Order.* Accordingly one of the Paſtors or Brethren of other Churches, ſtands up in the name of the reſt of the Brethren of other Churches there preſent, and declares their joyfulneſs and gladneſs of Heart *to ſee their Faith and Order*, and accordingly doth reach out unto them the *Right Hand of Fellowſhip*, with holy wiſhes and deſires that as their Foundation is laid in Chriſt Jeſus, ſo they may be Edified in him, *walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghoſt, and be multiplied.* See *Cotton*'s way to the ſame purpoſe.

Phil. Sure this practice looks very much as becomes the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. But what is the next thing to be done?

Chriſt. Now the next thing is to Organize this Body with Officers, in order to due adminiſtration of Ordinances.

Chap.

Chap. III. *Of Church Officers.*

Phil. HAVE they power within themſelves to chooſe their Officers?

Chriſt. They muſt undoubtedly have, the nature of the ſociety is ſuch that they muſt have it, for they aſſociate not themſelves by the Command or Power of Man, but of the Lord Jeſus. If none hath power over them but the Lord Jeſus alone, none but himſelf by their own free act, can conſtitute a Paſtor over them. 2. The power of chuſing their Officers, is one of the ſubordinate ends for which they do aſſociate, becauſe they will not be impoſed upon in this kind. 3. This power naturally grows up with, and is inſeparable from all free ſocieties gathered by mutual conſent, unleſs they be limited by their Charter in this kind, or be ſo falſe to themſelves and ſucceſſors, to give away their Priviledges, as many have done to Antichriſtian and Uſurping Powers. 4. Thus you ſee Officers were choſen *by common ſuffrage Act.* 1. 23. *ch.* 6. *Act.* 14. 23. it ſhould be read, that when they had conſtituted Elders by common ſuffrage, or lifting up of Hands in every Church, ſo that it was the

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uſual way. The Apoſtles or their ſubſtitutes one or more might be preſent to encourage or direct, but the People ordained by choice.

Phil. Doth their Power reach to call whom they will into Office?

Chriſt. 1. So as he be qualified for them, and the Office they call him to, as the Holy Ghoſt requires, they are to be very obſervant of the rule of the Goſpel, for that is their Charter, by which they aſſociate, and by which they do act. 2. They are hereby limited to chuſe men out from among themſelves, *Act.* 6.

Phil. But what if as yet they have none duly qualified among themſelves.

Chriſt. They may then invite qualified men, that can be ſpared from other Churches, with the leave of the Church or Churches, from whence they invite or call them.

Phil. Doth ſuch an invitation or call of one that is a Member of another Church, or Non-Member to any Church make an Officer?

Chriſt. No, it is but in order to the making ſuch an one an Officer, for he muſt be incorporated as a Member before he can be choſen and conſtituted an Officer. It is ſo in all civil ſocieties of the like nature, an Office is Power and Priviledge which none can enjoy in any ſociety but the Members thereof,

of, unleſs he come to it by force or uſurpation.

Phil. How many may be a ſufficient number to begin a Church Society? ſome ſay two or three agreeing in this kind is a ſufficient number, from *Mat.* 18. 19, 20.

Chriſt. They miſunderſtand the place who ſay ſo, for the two or three there may be underſtood of Women as well as Men, and are capable of performing the Duties which our Saviour there intends. But the Holy Ghoſt allows them no Office, unleſs of Deaconeſſes, no ruling Office or Power of ſuffrage in Election; and therefore if all of them be ſuch, or but two or one, they cannot conſtitute a Church for the ends Chriſt hath appointed it. It's plain the words of our Saviour they are only to encourage a Church Duty, and the regular gradual proceeding therein, in caſe of private offences ariſing between Brother and Brother. And promiſeth his Preſence with. And Bleſſing upon, the ſmalleſt number that are found, to exerciſe themſelves in agreement to perform any duty required of them in their capacities for the Honour of Chriſt, and in this caſe for the Reſtoration of a fallen Brother. See *Cottons Way.* As for the exact number that may begin a particular Church, the Holy Ghoſt hath left it indefinite, only it is eaſily to be ſuppo-

ſuppoſed that ſpiritual reaſon, and Chriſtian diſcretion muſt be our guide, that there be ſuch a number as is conſiſtent with the Nature of the thing, the greater, the better. And that we begin not a Church with ſo ſmall a number as may render the inſtitution of Chriſt abſurd, and his Obedience unto his commands therein impracticable.

Phil. I perceive then you allow not women any power in the Church, they are members and incorporated in the ſame body by mutual obligation to Communion with the Brethren, why have they not equal power with them?

Chriſt. Women are members, and very uſeful and profitable many ways, in their Graces and Gifts; and capable of performing any admonition between one another according to *Mat.* 18. for it belongs to mutual watch required of all members indefinitely. But our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath excluded them from all acts that are not ſuitable to their Sex in reſpect of Modeſty, and the ſtate of Subjection that they placed in to the man. 1. They are not Miniſterially to teach nor ſpeak authoritatively, 1 *Cor.* 14. 34. *Let your Women keep ſilence, for its not permitted to them to ſpeak, but to be under obedience.* Not but there may be occaſion for a Woman to ſpeak in way of obedience, as to ſpeak in anſwer to Queſtions

ons asked her, as at admiſſion to anſwer in giving a reaſon of her Faith when asked, in caſe of offence to anſwer for her ſelf, if accuſed, or to witneſs for or againſt another. But to do any miniſterial act in teaching, or to ſpeak in the management of any act of power or judicial proceeding, it belongs to the men, and not the women. 2. They may not exert any power of the keys, ſo much as by publick giving their ſuffrage or vote, for this reaſon, 1 *Tim.* 2. 12. *I ſuffer not a Woman to teach, or uſurp authority over the man, but to be in ſilence*, viz. In the Church, it's plain by the Text and Context, that the Apoſtle treats of the Womans carriage in the Church, and that it ought always to be in a way of Submiſſion and Subjection, not with Rule and Power, for ſuch a carriage is Uſurpation of that which belongs not to her, the Words οὐδὲ αὐθεντεῖν, is no where elſe uſed in the New Teſtament, and ſeldom in other authors; a thing is ſaid to be authentick when it's legal, true, and right, it's uſed of writings when approved, and ſo of witneſſes and authority, that there is no ground to contradict the one, or queſtion the legality and juſt right of the other; therefore this kind of Power is denied to the Woman, the Tranſlators render it well by uſurping Authority, where any aſſume Power or Authority to themſelves

ſelves that belongs not to them, there they uſurp it, the Apoſtle ſaith they have no authentick Power, *i. e.* Juſt and belonging to them, neither ſhall exerciſe any regularly in the Church of Chriſt.

Phil. I am ſatisfied that God never intended any ruling Power to Women in any Societies, but in Families over Children and Servants, and there not over their Husbands, therefore not a deciſive ſupream Power, unleſs Providence remove their Husbands. But if they ſhould have an equal ſuffrage with men in civil or eccleſiaſtick Societies, they muſt certainly then have exerciſe of Power over the men ſo far as they carry their ſhare in the Majority. But I confeſs it ſeems odd that members of the ſame Body each challenging an equal membership, ſhould not have all the ſame power?

Chriſt. There is nothing abſurd in it at all, becauſe Chriſt hath ſo appointed, and if we look but into natural Bodies, to which the Church is compared, for there are ſome members that are ruling as the Head, ſo the faculties of the Brain and Soul, and others are ruled, as Tongue, Hands, Feet, and the whole Body conſents to it, and each of them conſents that the ruling Power be in the Head; ſo it is in Bodies Politick.

Phil. I pray Sir where do you place Church Power?

Chriſt.

Christ. The Power that is in a Church is Christs, but it is acted in and by the Church, *in ecclesiâ, & mediante ecclesiâ.* The Church is entrusted with it, as an associated or embodied company of Believers, for the Key of Government was given to *Peter* and the rest, primarily, as believing Disciples, and associated followers of Jesus Christ. Secondarily as Ministers, and lastly, as Apostles extraordinary Ministers. And that the Power of binding or loosing is primarily in the Society, as such without the consideration of Officers appears; 1. Because the Church hath the essence, that is the matter and form of a Church without Officers, and therefore the power of it; for it admits the definition of a Church, and can act as a Church. 2. That body which by mutual agreement of it's members gives it self a being, will not deny it self that power and privilege which conduce to it's well being, or integral perfection, such is a Body Politick, especially a Church of Christ. 3. A Church considered only in it's membership is the first subject of Christs power for the exercise of it; because they can immediately after they are associated, (before they have chosen an Officer) admit more members, they can also admonish and excommunicate a corrupt member out of their body, for all such societies have an innate

nate power of increaſing themſelves, and of purging themſelves. 4. An aſſociated or incorporate Body not yet organized, hath power to conſult it's *bene eſſe* and make it ſelf an *integrum Organizatum*, a Body furniſhed with Officers as well as Members, and therefore can confer Office Power, where there was none before; now there is Power in that body whatever it is that doth confer Office, Power. 5. If there were not a Power in the Church as a Body Politick, it would be wholly deveſted of it, whenever it were deprived of it's Officers by Death as it often is, but it is not becauſe it can proceed to another choice.

Phil. I pray Sir, what kind of Power is this? is it legiſlative or executive, and where doth it lye, that I may know what you underſtand by the Keys?

Chriſt. Chriſt is the only Legiſlator, and in that reſpect his revealed Will is the *Key of David*, who openeth and no man ſhuts, and ſhuts and no man opens. And in this reſpect he doth not communicate his power, but in reſpect of execution he doth deligate his Power to Churches and Officers to act in his Name. And this is no other than a deciſive Power exerted in the Church, according to the rule that Chriſt hath given. This deciſive power paſſeth always upon matter

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of fact committed by a particular member, or to be done by the Church in admiſſion or rejection of members, or in chooſing of Officers. This deciſive power conſiſts in opening and ſhutting the doors of this ſpiritual houſe; and I call it the key of Government, for ſuch is the nature of a Key to open and ſhut a door; now this key of deciſive power is the unanimous ſuffrage of the brotherhood, or where that cannot be had, it muſt be the Majority, or elſe there could be no end of ſome differences in ſuch Societies.

Phil. Then the keys being this deciſive power, and lying in the fraternity, there needs no Officers at all.

Chriſt. It is one thing to be a key, and another to have the management of a Key. Chriſt gave *Peter* the key, but did not make him the key as a Church Officer, any otherwiſe than as an Apoſtle, and as other Apoſtles were, who had all deciſive Church-power in themſelves, to exert as occaſion required, but for the moſt part they acted by the management of the Church Key; as *Peter* in the choice of *Matthias*, *Act.* 1. and of Deacons, *Act.* 6. and *Paul* in caſting out of the inceſtuous Perſon.

Phil. A key is a dead thing, and cannot open or ſhut without a hand to manage it.

Chriſt. In a Politick body where the mem-

bers are intelligent Agents, it is not a dead thing, the Subjects of it being rational creatures, voluntary free agents, and living ſtones, and the indiſpenſible Law of ſelf preſervation is a juſtifiable reaſon of acting in this kind, though they do not act in ſo orderly a manner as they deſire, being as yet uncapable for it. But Chriſt having inſtituted Officers in his Church for the more orderly and comely management of the keys, they are upon the Terms of congregating bound alſo to chooſe them Officers of his appointment, to whoſe prudent care and watch, the management of the deciſive power is committed by Jeſus Chriſt, [through the hands of the people,] and to them Parents, Officers, the Church doth ſubject themſelves in the Lord.

Phil. That is, they now give up their power to the Paſtor they chooſe, and the deciſive power remains no longer in them, but they are diveſted of it.

Chriſt. It is one thing what a people do *de facto*, and another what they may do *de jure*. It is too true that through Ignorance or being impoſed upon by men of name, many Churches do give away their Power, or ſuffer it to be wreſted from them by uſurping Officers, ſuch as *Diotrephes*, who will be the Keys as well as have the management of them; but this is not to be *de jure*, for. 1. The deciſive

decisive power being the Key, and this the suffrage of the majority, they break the key, or change it by putting the decisive power into the breast of the minority, which is a single persons or a few at most. 2. They cannot devest themselves without destroying the very formal nature of the Society; for as their first being ariseth by common consent, so their continued acting must be. 3. If they give up this power, they part with their freedom, and are at the mercy of one man, and they set up an Arbitrary Government. 4. They cannot exercise that power which they have given up; and then in case of Male-administration, who shall say to *Archippus* take heed to thy Ministry that thou fulfil it, *&c.* for it may so fall out that a Church may see reason to deal with an Officer, and to excommunicate him from his Office Relation and Membership too. 5. What a condition is such a Church in that doth so? For if a Pastor or ruling Elder will be corrupt, how many ill members, at least such as are offensive to the Church may he take in, and how many good may he cast out, as *Diotrephes* did? 3 *John* 9. 6. What Christ hath joyned together none should separate; but Christ hath conjoyned Office Power and the Church Power. The Officers are for the due, orderly, honourable and solemn management of the

Church Power, not for the taking of it away. Officers are no addition of Power, to a Church, but for the better administration to edification and advantage, and in obedience unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and subordination unto him. And so far as they are entrusted and authorized by the Lord Jesus Christ, the Members are to obey and submit themselves unto them, *Heb.* 13. 17.

Phil. You seem to give away all the power from the Officers to the People, and make the Officers insignificant.

Christ. I say the power is wholly in the People before there is Officers, and when there is Officers they have not given away their power, but retain it in conjunction with their Officers, I mean as to the decisive power, or key for letting in and out, it is the Officers and Brethren. Though the authoritative management of Church rule, as to declaration of the mind of Christ, the prudential ordering matters, and presiding in all cases belongs to Officers. The management of our civil rights in *England*, is a great illustration in this case. We chuse to be judged by our Peers in matters of Life and Estate, & as to matter of fact the Jury adjudges, the decisive power is committed to them, and the Judge doth but preside in the Court, and see that all things be legally and orderly managed,

naged, declares the mind of the Law unto the Jury, and then delivers the Sentence of the Law as the Jury finds the fact. So it is in Churches, the Officers for rule have as much power in a Church according to the nature of that Constitution, as a Judge or a Mayor hath that sits on the Bench to hear and determine civil concerns.

Phil. You have greatly satisfied me now, that as our Constitution is the best in the World (were it not abused) for judging civil concerns, so I believe such a Constitution of a Church, must needs be the freest from exception. For 1. A people cannot be offended at such a judgment as is passed by themselves, for who would a Member of any Society be freer to be tryed by, than his Peers? And the Apostle blames the *Corinthians* for seeking a decision in doubtful cases of civil matters, out of the Church, 1 *Cor.* 6. 2. 2. And as for Church Officers, I think the most judicious would not desire an absolute power in themselves, to lye liable to the many censures of men, and the odium that would be cast by reproachful Tongues upon their most righteous and upright proceedings.

Christ. If the matters of the greatest concern in civil affairs, as to Life and Estate be tryed by twelve honest neighbours of ordinary Morality, scarce so much many times,

and all men usually acquiesce in it, how much more ought we to be satisfied, that all Ecclesiastical debates should come to decision, as to matter of Fact, by the judgment of so choice a community, as a Church of Christ is, or should be?

Phil. But ordinary Christians are to seek in many great and weighty matters of Faith & Order, and cannot determine where the Truth lies, it is fitter for Divines to judge.

Christ. I distinguish between matter of Fact, and matter of Law, The Churches decision is of matter of Fact, as to matter of the Law, or the mind and will of Christ, it's the Pastor, or Elders place to inform them, and if they are not satisfied therewith, it may be carried as a case to advise upon with other Churches or Elders.

Phil. I have little farther to object against the principles of Order which you have laid down, only one thing, which is, I confess, of no great weight to me. I have heard some Church-Members say, they joyn to this or that Church only, because of the present Pastor, yea, that they joyned to the Pastor only, not to the Church, and when the Pastor dieth, they are at liberty to go whither they please.

Christ. This proceeds from the Ignorance & Corruption of many Members, who are not, or will not be rightly informed in the Principles

ciples which they would seem to profess. This is so absurd a thing that the asserters thereof would be ashamed of it in civil Societies of such a Nature. Doth any Man joyn himself to the Master or Wardens of the Company only, or to the Company it self, when he is made a Member? Officers are changeable, either by the fundamental Constitution of the Society, or by Death; and if this were so, then all Churches were dissolved upon the Death of their Pastor. Besides, the terms of admission into Congregational Societies, speaks plainly otherwise, that they give up themselves to Christ, and the Congregation: put themselves under the Office watch, and the watch of each Member, are admitted by the common suffrage of the Church, therefore such things as these are but some of the Wiles and *Subterfuges* of Satan, which loose-spirited and Principled Members make use of, for the shaking off the Yoak of Christ.

Phil. But when a case falls out to be determined by the decisive power of the Church after due debate, as supposing the choosing of an Officer, or in the Key of rule, in admission or exclusion of a Member; and the Fraternity, or the Elders and Fraternity divide into a *Major* and *Minor* part, what should the *Minor* do?

Christ. It is by the known Laws of the

Society to acquiesce in what is done by the major part, as that which is the Churches act, or else it's not possible to maintain any Societies of that Nature, yea they must fall. But if a particular Member or more will not acquiesce in the Churches Act, as he is not fit to continue for the Peace and Order of the Church, so he may peaceably depart at the same door he came in at, to another Church by an express dismission.

Phil. What if he will not ask such a dismission, but withdraw from Communion, and reject it in a kind of defiance, and continue incorrigible therein?

Christ. Such an one ought to be dealt with in form and manner as in some scandalous sin of another nature, for such an one is herein scandalous. Besides, he is incorrigible, whereupon the Church is to proceed against him as such an one, he appearing to others but a man of *Belial* which is an ungovernable person, for so the Spirit speaks, 2 *Cor.* 6. 15. What fellowship hath Christ with *Belial? viz.* a lawless person that is not fit for any Society, especially of the Church, he will not bear the yoke of Christs Government.

Chap.

Chap. IV. *Of Officers extraordinary.*

Phil. I Desire you will now acquaint me what are the Offices and Ordinances which Christ hath Instituted in his Church.

Christ. The Officers Instituted by Christ are *Pastoral and Diaconal*; viz. *Bishops and Deacons*, *Phil.* 1. 1.

Phil. Are not *Presbyters and Bishops* distinct Orders? Our Church makes them so.

Christ. Nay, the Scripture make Presbyters and Bishops the same; there's no difference between them. For a Bishop is but an Overseer of the Church, so is every Presbyter or Elder; see *Acts* 20. 28. and there he is no more than an Elder to a Particular Congregation.

Phil. How comes it to pass that our Bishops are exalted so far above Presbyters in Office and Benefice?

Christ. From the corruptions of the pretended Church and Ministry; *viz.* through Ambition, Covetousness, and Human Inventions, whereby also all Antichristian Abominations over-spread the whole face of the Christian World.

Phil. But did not Christ give other Ministerial Officers to his Church?

Christ.

Christ. The Officers which Christ placed in his Church for Edification were *Extraordinary* or *Ordinary*, but both Pastoral; for they that are called Elders, and set for Doctrine and Administration in seals and Government, I call justly *Pastoral*; for feeding the Flock comprehends both in the true sence of the Spirit of God.

Phil. Who were the Extraordinary Officers?

Christ. They were Apostolick, and such who were not succeeded after the first Churches were planted, but by ordinary Pastoral Officers, and these were Apostles, and Apostolick helps in the performance of their Office-charge, and were Prophets and Evangelists, and were extraordinarily furnished with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, and Power, for the propagation of the Gospel, and plantation of Churches, but at the disposition and direction, for the most part, of the Apostles, as all other Church-Officers, as well as Churches were during their lives.

Eph. 4. 11.

Phil. And our Bishops say they succeed the Apostles, and all other Ministers are subordinate and subject to them.

Christ. They may as well say, the Pope succeeds *Peter*; for it's plain, they were extraordinarily sent and inspired, and therefore could

could not be ſucceeded but by ſuch as were extraordinarily aſſiſted, as they were, which hath been none: or ordinarily, and ſuch are Presbyters, and no others.

The Charaſteriſtick Notes of the Apoſtles were, 1. That they were to be ſuch who were ear and eye-witneſſes of Chriſt, from the Baptiſm of *John*, to the time of his taking up, *Acts* 1. 22. *viz.* of his Miniſtry, Miracles, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion. 2. That they ſhould be extraordinarily inſpired by the Holy Ghoſt for the revelation of the mind and will of Chriſt, ſince which none ever were. 3. To have the gifts of Tongues, and working Miracles. 4. That they ſhould have the charge of the Churches for the plantation, direction and government of them, every Apoſtle having the charge of all Churches, & in every Church, whatever power was afterward ordinarily in each Church. And though a Biſhop now in an Apiſh imitation by a pretended plea of Succeſſion would lay claim to power over many particular Congregations, yet each Biſhop is not allowed power in another mans Dioceſs. And as to the former characters where's the Biſhop can with a ſhew of any juſt pretence lay claim unto them.

Phil. What were the Prophets that accompanied and aſſiſted the Apoſtles in their Miniſtry?

Chriſt.

Christ. Of this sort it's said, *Acts* 13. 1. there were certain Prophets and Teachers, I suppose not much differing one from another in respect of the extraordinary Mission and Qualification, being Church-Members of the Church of *Jerusalem*, on which the Holy Ghost fell in the appearance of fiery Tongues, whereby they were furnished with Preaching, Gifts, and those of Tongues, in order to the propagation of the Gospel in all Nations, and to whatsoever People they came, Jew or Gentile, and went forth for this end, in subordination to, and by direction of the Apostles. And the first time we read of the Travels, is *Acts* 11. 19. occasioned by *Saul's* persecution; some of them men of *Cyprus* and *Cyrene*, who when they had passed through other places Preaching, came at last unto *Antioch*, and spake unto the *Grecian Jews*, Preaching the Lord Jesus Christ, the effect of which was the believing and turning of many unto the Lord. These, by the command of the Holy Ghost laid hands on *Paul* and *Barnabas*, but we read not that they baptized, or did perform any other Ministerial Act, if that were one. Probably they might convey the Gifts of the Holy Ghost on others by imposition of hands too.

Phil. What were the Evangelists?

Christ.

Christ. They were extraordinarily called to assist the Apostles also in Preaching the Lord Jesus, Baptism, and planting Churches, with Ordination of Officers in them. *Philip* Preached and Baptized, and wrought Miracles, *Acts* 8. 5, 12, 39. But did not convey the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; they were bestowed by the prayers of *Peter* and *John*, as the laying on of hands, *verse* 15, 16. and *Philip* is called an Evangelist, *Acts* 21. 8. *Timothy* was an Evangelist, 1 *Tim.* 4. 5. and Assistant to *Paul* in his Apostolick Function, and he did lay on hands. Now as to this, that *Philip* did not, and *Timothy* did, I judge these secondary Apostolick men acted not as the Apostles, by a general Commission, but by the immediate particular dictates of the Holy Ghost: or by the mediate Commands from time to time given to them by the Apostles to whom they were assistant and subordinate in their Actings; there were some which we call Evangelists, from their writing the History of the Gospel, two of which were primarily Apostles; *viz.* *Matthew* and *John*. *Mark* and *Luke* might be Evangelists in the other sense.

Phil. Who were left the Pastoral Officers in the Church at *Jerusalem* upon Christ's Ascension?

Christ.

Christ. The whole Ministerial Office in that Church was left and placed at first in the Apostles, both Pastoral and Diaconal, and either of the Apostles might have presided, but that by consent (it may be) grounded on the words of our Saviour, *Mat.* 16. 19. *Peter* took the Chair, *viz.* the orderly management of the Keys. That the diaconal Office was in the said Apostles at first, is manifest from the account we have, *Act.* 2. 4, 5. of the Members bringing their possessions, and laying them at their feet to dispose of, as a Church stock, and from the reason given by the twelve to the multitude, for the choice of Deacons they finding the serving tables to be to great a Burthen to them upon such increase of the Church. Afterwards also, as the necessity and state of the Church required, there were Elders or Presbyters chosen distinct from the Apostles, which appears from *Act.* 15. 23. And it's most plain the increasing and multiplying Officers, in the Church was according as the necessary reasons thereof did arise from the increase or otherwise, which necessities by the Holy Ghost breathing through the Apostles were provided for and supplied.

Chap.

Chap. V. *Of ordinary Officers.*

Phil. WHat Officers do compleatly Organize a particular Congregation?

Chriſt. *Paſtoral and Diaconal*, ſo that *Paſtor* and *Deacon* do make a Church compleatly Organiz'd, but through multiplication of a Church, or for other reaſons there may be good ground to chuſe coadjutors in each Office aforeſaid, for the encreaſing the Officers of one kind or another, that the Church may be edified.

Phil. What is the Paſtors Office?

Chriſt. The Paſtors Office is to feed the Church as the flock of Chriſt, over which the Holy Ghoſt hath made him an overſeer or Biſhop. Which Paſtoral feeding conſiſts in Goſpel Preaching, adminiſtration of Sacraments, and Government. In the laſt reſpect more eſpecially he is called a Biſhop or Overſeer, *Act.* 20.

Phil. What do you mean by Goſpel Preaching?

Chriſt. I mean a right dividing of the Word of God, according to the revealed Will of God, and it ſtands in Doctrine, exhortation, and reproof, *&c.* to bring home the Scrip-

Scripture for the inſtruction of the Hearts and Minds of Men, by expoſition, application, catechiſm, and defending the Truth againſt gain-ſayers.

Phil. You give the whole Preaching Office unto the Paſtor.

Chriſt. It is in him, and may ordinarily be performed by him, providing his ſtrength and ability can reach to it, and other parts of his Office, lye not too hard upon him, or can be performed to the Churches full edification.

Phil. But what if it cannot be performed to the Church's full edification?

Chriſt. Then it is requiſite that a *Coadjutor*, or *aſſiſtant* to him, be choſen in this part of his Office, to wit a *Teacher* or *Teaching Elder*, who is to wait moſtly on doctrinal, expoſitory, and catechumenal teaching.

Phil. But this ſeems not a diſtinct Officer.

Chriſt. Though he come into part of the Paſtoral or Epiſcopal Office, yet he becomes a diſtinct Officer, for he comes in as a governing, feeding Officer, attending more particularly on the part of the Office, to which he is appointed and choſen, for he is to feed the Flock ſo far as the Holy Ghoſt hath made him overſeer, by the call of the Church for their neceſſary ſupply. Neither doth his Office power curtalize at all the power of the Paſtor, only acting in conjunction

junction with his Office is an ἀντιλήψις, *opitulatio*, a help, or assistance, taking off part of the burthen from him; and such Teachers were set in the Church, 1 *Cor.* 12. 28. and such an one is to wait on his teaching, *Rom.* 12.7. Where teaching seems plainly to be specified as a distinct office-work in one called thereto; as exhorting in him that is more especially called to exhortation. And Teachers are plainly enough named in distinction from Pastors, as Officers set by Christ in his Churches, *Eph.* 4. 11, 12. *For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the Ministry*, i. e. Officers for the filling up the ministerial office, *and edifying the body of Christ.* Therefore when this Officer is necessary for full edification of the Church in the work of the Ministry then he is to be added.

Phil. Is there no Officer appointed to take up, as a help to the Pastor in ruling and governing the Church? For where a Church is large, the oversight of the flock in way of rule, according to the order of the Gospel will require much labour, diligence, and wisdom.

Christ. There are ruling Elders, or Presbyters, called to attend and wait upon that part of the Pastoral Office, to take up with him, and be helps in Governments, I conceive they are to be understood by δυνάμεις, 1 *Cor.*

12. 28. which ſhould not be rendred miracles, but ruling Officers, or Powers, as the ſame word is rendred, *Rom.* 8. 38. Perſons in Power, the abſtract put for the *concrete*, and the gifts for the edifying of the Church, firſt and laſt are ſpecified under the name of χαεισματα, Gifts graciouſly beſtowed, among which are κυβερνησεις, *gubernationes*, governing or ruling Gifts.

Phil. You make then a *Ruling Elder* a diſtinct Officer of the Church?

Chriſt. I do not ſay that the Paſtor or Teacher are not ruling Elders, but that when one or both are not able to manage the ruling part for the ſufficient edification of the Church: there ought one or more to be called into that part of the Miniſtry, and to attend thereto with Diligence. And accordingly the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 12. 7, 8, 9. calls the whole Miniſtry of the Church Epiſcopal and Diaconal by the Name of διακονία, or Miniſtry, and gives us an account of the ſeveral Offices to be attended to, the Teacher that attends on Teaching, the Exhorter that attends on Exhortation, the Deacon that diſtributes with ſimplicity, the ruling Elder, ὁ προϊσταμενος ἐν σπουδῇ, he that preſides in governing, let him do it with Induſtry or Diligence.

Phil. But is there any Presbyter or Elder that is not teaching? You ſeem to be for Lay-Elders.

Chriſt.

Chriſt. The diſtinction between *Clergy and Laity* comes from *Rome*, we own it not in the ſence it's uſed by no means, for the people are the Clergy in the ſence of the Spirit of God. The Apoſtle *Peter* ſhewing the Duty of Presbyters, 1 *Pet.* 5. 3. he ſaith, Μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων, not Lording it, as Lord-Biſhops over Gods heritage. 2. They are no more Laymen than the Paſtor and Teacher, yea I may affirm if they that are ordained Officers of Chriſt in the Church are made thereby the Clergy, then all the Miniſters, even Deacons as well as Paſtors, for there's but one kind of Ordination to all the Officers, Presbyters and Deacons. 3. We deny not Paſtors and Teachers to be ruling Elders, neither do we deny that a ruling Elder may ſpeak and teach, as occaſion requires to the edification of the Church, eſpecially in matters that concern his Office in Publick or Private. And therefore it's one qualification requiſite to all Presbyters or ruling Elders preaching or not, that they be apt to teach, 1 *Tim.* 3. 2. and 2 *Tim.* 2. 24. The Elder muſt be διδακτικος, for a Biſhop (*i. e.* a ruling Elder or Presbyter) muſt be apt to teach, *i. e.* ſo far at leaſt as to be able to give a Word of Exhortation, as he is called thereto. 4. But the Apoſtle doth ſpeak very clearly in diſtributing the Elders into them whoſe

ordinary and chief work is to labour in the Word and Doctrine. And ſuch whoſe more peculiar work is to attend Government, though there never wants thoſe that will endeavour to darken and baffle the expreſſions of Scripture that are cleareſt to common ſence, 1 *Tim.* 5. 17. *The Presbyters that rule well* [for προεστῶτες are Preſiders or Preſidents in rule and Government, as all the Presbyters or Biſhops are in the Church] ſhall be *worthy, or let them be counted worthy of double honour*; [i. e. by virtue of their Office and well management thereof. Let ſuch have greater honour than any aged perſon that is but an ordinary Brother, for he had ſpoken before of our carriage to aged Brethren and Siſters: But ſuch as theſe *we ſhould eſteem them for their work ſake*] *but eſpecially they that labour in the Word and Doctrine*, the Preaching Presbyters, let them in an eſpecial manner be honoured or eſteemed.

Phil. How many ruling Elders ought there to be?

Chriſt. Chriſt hath not limited Churches here, but left them to walk by the rule of edification. The Church may be ſuch as that it may be fully edified by a Paſtor or Teacher as the ſole Presbyter. And there may be little or no uſe of a diſtinct ruling Elder, till the Church encreaſe to a greater bigneſs, and

and when it is encreaſed the Church may chooſe one or more according as is judged neceſſary to it's edification.

Phil. What if the Church have not a man or men duly qualified for that Office?

Chriſt. They may pitch upon a Brother (not in Office) of another Congregation, and call him to it. And why not as well as to call one to be a preaching Elder, that is a Brother of another Congregation? for all Church Officers ſhould be taken out of Churches, and firſt made Members of that Church, wherein they are to ſerve Chriſt in Office before they are ſolemnly ſet apart thereto.

Phil. What reaſons may a Church be moved by, to chooſe a ruling Elder or more?

Chriſt. If there be a Brother aptly qualified, and can attend it, there need be no diſpute about it, though the Church be but ſmall, it may be much Comfort and help to the Paſtor and tend to much Edification of the Church. 2. The Church may ſee reaſon to chuſe ruling Elders, from the great encreaſe and largeneſs of the Church, that the management of this part of the Paſtoral Office lye not too heavily upon their Paſtor. 3. The Church may ſee reaſon for it, becauſe their Paſtor qualified it may be with much of Grace, Preaching Gifts and Learning, may not be qualified with

a Spirit of Government; and it is very ſeldom that men of retired ſtudious lives have ſo great an inſight into the right ordering of Politick Affairs. A man may be a great Mathematician, but yet an ill Seaman, not know how to work or ſtear a Ship ſo well as a Maſters Mate or a Boatſwain. There is in ſpirituals, as well as temporals, a skill in practice to have the ſenſes exerciſed by reaſon of uſe, as well as a Knowledge and Underſtanding of the rule.

Phil. What is the Office-work of a ruling Elder?

Chriſt. To have a ſpecial regard to admiſſions, to make good enquiry after the Faith, and Holy Converſations of ſuch, who offer themſelves to Church Communion, to propound them, and bring them to the Church. 2. To make inſpection into the lives and converſations of actual members, frequently to viſit them, to rebuke any ſeemingly walking as not becoming the Goſpel, to enquire after the reaſon of members abſentments from Communion, to exhort them to frequent aſſembling together for mutual edification, to comfort the afflicted, to ſupport the weak, to viſit the ſick, to inform the ignorant, *&c.* 3. In all matters of admonition and cenſure to hear and prepare matters for the Church before hand, that there be nothing

thing done in Confuſion, and in Diſquietment of Mind in the Church, but with all meekneſs, unanimity and authority in the Name of the Lord Jeſus.

Phil. You have ſhewed that the Miniſterial Offices of the Church are Paſtoral, or Diaconal, and have ſhewed that the Paſtoral or ſuch as belong to the Paſtoral care are Exhortation, Teaching, Adminiſtration of the Seals, Rule and Government; according to all which parts of a Paſtors Office, the Holy Ghoſt hath provided aſſiſting Officers and helps, ſuch as Teachers and ruling Elders to the full edification of the Church; I pray ſpeak now ſomething of the Deacons Office.

Chriſt. The Engliſh word Deacon is derived from the *Greek* διάκονος, which ſignifies a Miniſter or one that ſerves Chriſt and his Church in Office, it is uſed for any Miniſter at large, διακονία, or Deaconſhip is applyed to the Apoſtleſhip it ſelf, *Act.* 1. 17, 25. or to a part of their Miniſtry as it was at firſt, *Act.* 6. 4. It is applyed to any particular ſervice of the Church, *Act.* 11. 29. *ch.* 12. 25. And *Paul* applyeth it to his whole Miniſtry as an Apoſtle, *Act.* 20. 24. *Rom.* 11. 13. *ch.* 15. 31. 2. *Cor.* 6. 3.

But it hath it's peculiar application to that Miniſtry which tends to the ſupply of the Churches and Saints neceſſities, by way of diſtri-

diſtribution of Collections made to this end and purpoſe, to whoſeſoever care it is committed; and ſuch a ſervice *Paul* ſaith he undertook on the behalf of other Churches, 2 *Cor.* 8. 4. which is *called the Deaconſhip of this Liturgy*, 2 Cor. 9. 12. rendred the *adminiſtration of this ſervice.* Now we find as Office titles of large ſignificancy, are brought down by the Holy Ghoſt to denote a ſingle particular Office in the Church as Apoſtle, Paſtor, Biſhop, Presbyter, *&c.* So here the word Deacon is often uſed for all ſacred Miniſtry, Liturgy or Service, is a Title put by the Spirit of God upon this Officer in the Church, who is called and ſet apart to the Liturgy (or ſervice) of the Church in this way of Adminiſtration, by diſtribution.

Phil. When was the firſt Inſtitution of Deacons?

Chriſt. It was *Act.* 6. an Apoſtolick (*i. e.* as much as to ſay) a Divine Inſtitution, and it's not amiſs to obſerve the reaſon & ground of it, it was to eaſe the Apoſtles in that great burden that lay upon them; when thoſe that were converted ſold their poſſeſſions, and brought the Mony and laid it down at their feet; and it was to be given forth again for an equal and neceſſary ſupport to *every one*, as need required. This was too great a charge, and burthen to the Apoſtles, and likely afterward

terward to be unto ordinary Paſtors; and hence they inſtitute this Office of Deaconſhip, and therefore is alſo a more remote Office of Aſſiſtance unto the ruling Epiſcopacy, but being very diſtinct in nature and kind from that ſort of Miniſtry; wherefore the Apoſtles ſpeak after that manner. *Act.* 6. 1, 4. That the Church ſhould chooſe them fit men for this daily care and truſt, and they would betake themſelves to the Miniſtry of the Word and Prayer.

Phil. What ground have you for this Officer in the Church?

Chriſt. The very nature of ſuch a Society, as a Church requireth it, and I take it to be a very good ground for an Office, when it's founded upon the well being of a Society, and it's ordinary neceſſities do require it. But the Holy Ghoſt is moſt expreſs upon this account, that the Church of *Jeruſalem* by the appointment of the Apoſtles, choſe ſuch Officers for the neceſſary ſervice of the Church. And that they were afterward ſtated Officers in other Churches appears from *Phil.* 1. 1. And the Apoſtle *Paul* doth expreſly call their Miniſtry, an Office. 1 *Tim.* 3. 10, 13. As the Word is rendred and ought to be by our Interpreters. Their Qualifications and Encouragements are alſo very particular, *v.* 8. 9, 10, 13. See *Rom* 12. 8. *He*

is

it to be grave, ſober, exemplary in Faith and Holineſs, &c.

Phil. What is the Office of a Deacon?

Chriſt. The Holy Ghoſt calls it *ſerving of Tables*, the Lords Table and the Tables of the Saints, in a faithful collection and diſtribution of the ſtock of the Church which is given for the maintenance of Ordinances, Miniſtry, and relief of the Poor, which ought to be done with Simplicity, *Prudence and Chearfulneſs*. And of which they are accountable to the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Church, let that word Chearfulneſs be obſerved, becauſe many are apt to murmur at this Office as a burden to them.

Phil. How many Deacons are there to be?

Chriſt. There were ſeven in the firſt Church of the Goſpel, but there have ſeldom Churches arrived to the bigneſs of that ſince, neither doth the Spirit ſeem to limit to a certain number. The Church is to judge how many are requiſite to perform the duties required in that Office, according to their preſent ſtate and ſtanding, yea they may increaſe their number if they ſee need requires.

Phil. Is there any help in this Miniſtration ſpecified by the Holy Ghoſt?

Chriſt. Yes, and it ſeems to be pretty plain, that there were Widdows, or Deaconeſſes in Ma-

Matrons, who were to do that part of the Office, which was not ſo convenient for men, ſuch as to viſit the Sick, eſpecially Siſters, and enquire into their neceſſities, and bring an account to the Deacons, if any be without neceſſary ſupply for food, raiment, phyſick, attendance and the like; ſee 1 *Tim.* 5. 5, 9, 10. And *Phœbe* ſeems to have been a Deaconeſs to the Church of *Cenchrea*, Rom. 16. 1.

Phil. You have ſpoken to all the fixed Officers in a particular Congregation, & although there are ſome who would deny ſome of theſe to be diſtinct Officers; yet ſeeing here is in every Church, theſe Office ſervices to be performed, and the Holy Ghoſt ſpeaks of them diſtinctly under theſe two Heads, *Biſhops and Deacons*, & that the Paſtor, Teacher, and ruling Elder all concur to the fulfilling the Paſtoral or Epiſcopal Office for the Churches Edification; and Men, and Women Deacons make up the Liturgical or Diaconal Office. I have received much ſatisfaction upon this account, but methinks I am much to ſeek about one great concern of Chriſt and his Kingdom, *viz.* The propagation of the Goſpel to the unconverted, for which work and ſervice I cannot ſee how Chriſt hath provided ſince the Apoſtles times, for all the Officers you have mentioned are Officers only in and to the Church, and ſo far as men are

capa-

capable of hearing the Word preached in the Churches, they have a converting Miniſtry, but they that are remote muſt be without a Miniſtry, becauſe there is no Churches.

Chriſt. Chriſt hath conſtituted no ſtated Officers, but in and to a particular Congregation. He hath not called and ſent any to the work of the Miniſtry for Converſion in the pureſt ſtate and ſtanding of the firſt Churches, but from the Churches the firſt Apoſtles themſelves went out from the Church of *Jeruſalem*, *Paul* and *Barnabas* from the Church at *Antioch*, ſo that it is according to the propheſie of the latter days. *The Law ſhall go out from* Zion, *and the Word of the Lord from* Jeruſalem. And Chriſt hath provided a way to ſend the Goſpel to Infidels and unconverted ones, for *Rom.* 10. 14, 15. *How ſhall they preach except they be ſent.* And though I doubt not but God hath had his way in a providential manner of ſending the Goſpel into the blind parts of the Earth, when viſible Churches were hardly to be found, through Antichriſtian Darkneſs that overſpread the Earth, yet Chriſt hath an inſtituted way of ſending the Goſpel to the unconverted world. For men may have a Call and Dedication to ſome peculiar work and ſervice to be done for Chriſt out of the Church, *viz.* To be an Ambaſſador for Chriſt to beſeech men to be recon-

reconciled unto God. The Word of the Lord hath providentially been ſent to many places, as the ſcattering the Church by Perſecution was the occaſion, *Act.* 11. 19. Of preaching the Goſpel at *Phœnice*, *Cyprus*, and *Antioch*, *&c.* and when tidings of theſe things that were done came to the Church at *Jeruſalem*, they ſent forth *Barnabas* that he ſhould go as far as *Antioch*, and afterward he was ſent forth again from the Church at *Antioch*.

I ſhall not enlarge now on this point, I may meet with it again elſewhere; the due and orderly way of going forth to the exerciſe of the Miniſtry is by the miſſion of a particular Congregation by the ſuffrage and Prayers thereof, and he may be called a Teacher, ſuch as were in the Church of *Antioch*; and ſo I diſtinguiſh of Teachers: 1. Such as are ſtated Teachers to the Church wherein they are. 2. Such that are ſent forth to open blind eyes, *&c.* To preach to the World, men lying in their infidelity.

Phil. You having given me a diſtinct account of the ſeveral Officers of a Goſpel Church, I deſire to underſtand how they are made and conſtituted in an orderly regular manner.

Chriſt. It can be but by Ordination.

Phil. What, all of them by Ordination, Elders and Deacons, the Lay-Officers?

Chriſt.

Chriſt. I told you before we own no ſuch Officers, but them that are Eccleſiaſtically ſo, and therefore not Lay-Officers; the way of Ordination of ruling Elders and Deacons is the ſame with that of Paſtor and Teacher.

Phil What by laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, it ſeems to be a mighty prophanation of that Sacred ordinance to apply it to men that are illiterate, and have not been at the Univerſity.

Chriſt. Chriſt did not limit any Ordinances to Literate men, and to Univerſity men, his practice was quite contrary, but I pray Sir, tell me. 1. Where impoſition of hands is called Ordination? 2. Whether the Deacons had not impoſition of hands, *Act.* 6. 3. Where any other ordinary Church Officers had impoſition of hands? And therefore if there had not been ſome more reaſon of the Holy Ghoſt than ordinary for applying it to Deacons, whether they ſhould have had it? If it was in an ordinary way of Adminiſtration, and therefore all Church Officers to have it, then they have eminent right to it ſtill. And then what prophanation is it to apply an Ordinance according to it's firſt inſtitution?

Phil. You ſuggeſt ſtrange notions about Ordination, I muſt get you to clear them up to me.

Chriſt.

Chriſt. Sir, you ſhall excuſe me for the preſent, I ſhall do it another time; I only tell you now, that all Church Officers are made by Ordination, and ordained alike, and that impoſition of hands is not Ordination; and if the moſt be made of it, it's but a Ceremony annexed which now is obſolete. And that all Ordination belongs to the Church of whom the Perſon ordained is a member, yea if impoſition of hands be a neceſſary Ceremony therein, it's not to be performed by the Elders of other Churches; but by the Presbytery or delegated Brethren of the ſaid ſame Church. Theſe things ſhall be demonſtrated to you according to that meaſure of light which Chriſt hath given.

Phil. Theſe things look not only Heterodox in reſpect of the common ſentiments of ordinary Profeſſors of the reformed Religion, but contrary to what many, yea moſt of our Learned Divines have wrote and practiſed, but I ſhall wait till you give me further light into them, and demonſtration for the aſſertions you have laid down. In the mean time give a brief account of Goſpel ordinances inſtituted by Chriſt for a Churches Edification.

CHAP.

Chap. VI. *Of Church Ordinances of Chriſts Inſtitution.*

Chriſt. THe inſtituted Ordinances of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, are, 1. Preaching the Word. 2. Prayer and Praiſes. 3. The Seals of the New Teſtament. 4. The Keys, which are the Churches exerciſe of it's power. 1. In Election of Officers. 2. Admiſſion of Members. 3. Tranſlating Members to other Churches, Admonition, and Cenſures. 5. Contribution for the ſupport of Ordinances, Miniſtry, and neceſſity of the Saints. 6. I may add unto this, Holy Conference for mutual Edification. Theſe are given either as peculiar Priviledges to the Churches, ſuch as the Seals and Keys of Diſcipline, or primarily (though for the Converſion and in order to the Salvation of others) but for the ſake of the Churches, for their Multiplication, growth and Confirmation in Grace.

Phil. Speak to theſe Goſpel Ordinances particularly, as to the diſtinct Nature, End and Uſe of them.

Chriſt. 1. The Preaching of the Word comprehends, 1. The reading of it frequently in the Church. 2. The opening and expounding of it. 3. The applying it unto the Conſcien-

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ces of Saints and unbelieving Sinners, according to the true intent thereof, by Instruction, Reprehension, Exhortation, Direction, Consolation, in the evidence and demonstration of the Spirit. 4. By the instilling, and promoting the knowledge of God in the Mysteries of the Gospel, by Catechizing Children & Youth, in such a way and manner as may conduce most to the enlightning their understandings in, and bringing over their affections to, the things of God in their tender years.

Phil. Sir, I doubt in the last thing mentioned, many if not most of your Churches have been too defective.

Christ. I grant it, and fear the next Generation will have great cause to complain of us, for the Children of Church Members do manifestly grow up in Ignorance, carnality, and looseness, little care is taken of most religious Parents, and less by the Churches, to educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, all, or the chief of Parents care, is how to provide well for them in the World. Besides, every way of Catechizing will not answer the end, to learn a Catechism meerly by rote, and a preaching upon it, will make no more impression on their Ages, than other preaching, there must be care to instill in to their understandings by little and little, in a plain and familiar way of discourse

with them, as they are able to receive: if a great deal of Water be flusht on upon a narrow-mouth'd Bottle very little or none will go in, but you may by a small stream, and gradually, fill it. Ignorance in Religion, is destruction of Religion, it hath been the mother of all false Worship and Error in Doctrine, and it's evident it is the cause for the most part of the disorders in, and among Churches.

Phil. To what Officers doth the ministration of the word in Churches belong?

Christ. To the Pastor, and Teacher, if there be any, they being the Preaching Elders that labour in the Word and Doctrine. The Pastors work in Preaching seems to lye most in dealing with the Consciences and Affections of the hearers, whether for Conversion or Edification. The Teacher insists most on the enlightning the understanding by doctrinal Truths, Catechising, Argumentation and Conviction of gainsayers. *Rom.* 12. 7, 8. If one Officer according to the present circumstances, can perform his Office to the full edification of the Church in all these things, it's well: if not then both are requisite, as hath been spoken. And the word is to be so preached as hath been said, 2 *Tim.* 4. 2, 3. *Eph.* 4. 12. *Act.* 2. 42. the Apostles doctrine is the word that is to be Preached, and to be attended on by us.

Phil.

Phil. I look upon prayer and praiſes abbe great Church Ordinances, as well as duties of a Univerſal nature to all and individual perſons in private and ſecret.

Chriſt. It is a ſolemn Church Ordinance, expreſſed either way in publick prayers or in praiſes, not only in the Prayers of a ſingle perſon, the mouth of the Congregation: but in Pſalms and Hymns. That prayer is a Church ordinance, and a duty to be performed frequently in the Church ſervice, ſee *Act.* 1.14. *Theſe continued with one accord in Prayer and Supplication*, ſo *Act.* 2.42. no other Ordinance can be duly adminiſtred without it.

Phil. I think there is no Chriſtians but hold that Prayer is a Church Ordinance: but I have heard ſome except againſt ſinging of Pſalm in Metre as we do.

Chriſt. That ſinging Pſalms is an Ordinance of the Church, I think is plain. 1. That ſinging Praiſes to God, with an audible voice, was practiſed in the Apoſtles times by the Apoſtles, *Act.* 16.25. 2. That they are to be ſung in the Church, at the moſt ſolemn Ordinance of the Lords Supper is without diſpute, *Mat.* 26.30. *Mark* 14.26. 3. That ſinging with words of Pſalms and Hymns, at the ſame time making melody in the Heart is recommended to us, *Eph.* 5.19. ſo *Col.* 3.16. teaching and admo-

ning your ſelves [ſo ἑαυτοῖς ſhould be rendred, and not one another, for thus Interpreters have rendred the ſame word your ſelves, *Eph.* 5. 19.] in Pſalms and Hymns and Spiritual Odes in Grace, ſinging in your Heart to the Lord. From both which places ſinging Spiritual Pſalms and Hymns, for inſtructing and quickning a gracious Heart ſweetly and affectionately carried forth in them, is highly recommended to us by the Spirit of God. And that it's a duty to ſing in conjunction with others, appears by what was practiſed by our Saviour and his Diſciples at the inſtitution of the Lords Supper, that they Sang an Hymn. And by *Paul* and *Silas* in Priſon, but what the Holy Ghoſt ſayeth expreſly he expects of us, *Rom.* 15. 6. that you may with one Mind and one Mouth, *i.e.* with ſameneſs of Words and Heart glorifie God.

Phil. Some may ſay this is to uſe forms.

Chriſt. A. 1. Tho' it be to uſe a form in Singing, it's not an impoſed form, but freely taken and choſen, no more than the Miniſters Text is impoſed. 2. A form allowed or enjoyned by the Spirit of God may and ought to be uſed as the words of inſtitution in adminiſtration of the Seal of Baptiſm, or of the Elements in the Lords Supper. 3. The nature of the thing requireth that it be premeditated that the Singing be melodious, *i. e.* orderly,

orderly, not with confuſion, and not in abſurd diſſonies.

Phil. But ſome are againſt ſinging in mixt Congregations.

Chr. They may as well be againſt publick Praying in mixt Congregations. Doth not he that Prayeth endeavour to uſe ſuch expreſſions, as moſt may joyn with him in? So he that propounds a Pſalm or Hymn, endeavours to ſuit it to the Congregation, where, and the time and occaſion when, it is to be ſung. It's due to God from all his creatures to praiſe him; it's his Saints only bleſs him, but it's not in our power to judge the heart of him that joyns in a publick duty, and if it be to be performed publickly, as Praying and Preaching, we are not to hinder any that will joyn with us; if they are not upright in one, or profited by the other, the ſin lyes on themſelves to anſwer for it.

Phil. Which be the Seals of the New Teſtament, and why called ſo?

Chriſt. They are Baptiſm and the Lords Supper. And they are called Sacraments becauſe ſacred and ſolemn ratifications of Gods Promiſe to us, and ours to him, they are ſigns, being ſignificant of Inviſible Grace and Bleſſing. They are called Seals, as Circumciſion and the Paſſover were, being for confirmation of the Covenant relation between God and Us.

Phil. I pray ſpeak of Baptiſm; it hath been much controverted upon many accounts.

Chriſt. I ſhall not detain you upon the moſt controverted points of it, but tell you now briefly what we believe and practiſe about it. 1. That it is an inſtituted ordinance by the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to remain in the Goſpel Churches to the end of the world, as appears by *Mat.* 28. 19. 2. That the Element or ſignificant ſign is Water. 3. That it being bleſſed by Prayer is to be applyed in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt. 4. That the thing ſignified is the waſhing in regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghoſt, wherein the Lord Jeſus Chriſt his precious Blood is applied for Juſtification and Sanctification, and the perſon Baptized dedicated unto the Lord, remiſſion of Sin is eminently ſignified thereby, *Act.* 2. 38. *chap.* 10. 43.

Phil. Then you think a perſon to be regenerated in Baptiſm.

Chriſt. It is but a ſign of that which is, or ſhould be, in adult perſons it's requiſite there be credible ſigns or grounds to think they are regenerated, but many ſuch who are Baptized are not; and therefore it is evident none are regenerated meerly by partaking of that Ordinance, unleſs we allow falling away from effectual grace, and when it is admini-

adminiſtred to the Infant Seed of a Believer, it is a ſign of what is or may be, and is both deſired and prayed for.

Phil. I ſee you are for the Baptiſm of Infants.

Chriſt. We are for it, and do practiſe it. We doubt not of it, and upon good grounds, for we look upon Baptiſm to be the right of every Child of a Church Member. 1. As the Infant is a Church Member in the Parents right, the Parent having given himſelf and Children to be the Lords in Church Relation. 2. That it is a Priviledge the Parents challenge by vertue of the Promiſe which the Spirit of God ſaith, *Act.* 2. belongs to them and to their Children; the Promiſe made to *Abraham*, is transferred to all the Faithful, who are ſaid, *Gal.* 4. 28. *chap.* 3. 29. to be the Children of the Promiſe, as *Iſaac* was, and therefore have the Covenant and Seal of the Covenant belonging to them for themſelves and Children, as *Iſaac* had. And in the adminiſtration it is of uſe to the Parents. 1. For confirmation of their Faith in that extenſive Promiſe. 2. For a Solemn dedication of the Child unto the Lord. 3. For an obligation to bring it up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Phil. May not a profeſſed Believers Child be Baptized that is not actually a Member of any Church?

Christ. He that is a Believer ought to claim his right to all Church Priviledges, and therefore to joyn himself to some particular Congregation, where he may enjoy all Ordinances according to the rule of the Gospel. And whilst he doth not, he evidently lives in a Sin of great Omission, if Providence hath given him opportunity so to do. And I know not but a credible Believer, may as well desire the Lords Supper without adding himself to a particular Congregation, as to desire the Baptism of his Child without it: and therefore it renders his profession very hardly credible, whilst he lives in this great Sin of Omission.

Phil. Is there any just ground to believe that an Infant Baptized and Dying in his Infancy, is certainly Saved.

Christ. By no means, if you understand all Infants of good and bad, as they are usually now promiscuously Baptized, for the Salvation of Infants is a Divine Secret.

Phil. But what comfort hath a Believing Parent in this case, any more than a professed Unbeliever or Infidel? Is there no promise that he can take comfort from, upon this account? If not, then it's possible such an affliction may befall a Child of God for which he hath no promise from the Word of God to support him in, for without a promise

Faith

Faith can take no hold of God, for Comfort.

Christ. In case a Believers Child dieth in Infancy, and his trouble be about the Eternal state of his Child: I know no Promise in the Word of God will reach forth Comfort to him, but this, *I will be thy God, and the God of thy Seed.* Seeing his Child lived not to make a personal and professed Rejection of his Covenant Relation in adult years as *Ishmael* and *Esau* did. And thus a Believer by Faith in that Promise can take such Comfort to himself in that Condition which no Unbeliever can. For there's not one Word in Scripture that speaks of the Salvation of an Unbelievers Child dying in Non-age. What God hath reserved in his secret Counsel is not for us to determine.

Phil. Is not Baptism a converting Ordinance?

Christ. If it be true as your Church saith, that *he that is Baptized is certainly saved*, it must needs be so most times. But although it's a sign that referrs to Regeneration and Initiation thereby in the Covenant, yet it is a confirming Sacrament as the other is, it is always for Confirmation of Faith in the Promise, both in Parents and Children, neither is it improved by the baptized till he believe.

Phil. Now I pray speak something of that other great Seal the Lords Supper.

Christ.

Chriſt. It is called, *breaking of bread* by a *Synech. Act.* 2. 42. *ch* 20. 7, 11. It is *the Supper, John* 13. 2. *ch.* 21. 20. *The Lords Supper,* 1 *Cor.* 11. 20. Becauſe of peculiar Relation to the *Remembrance of our Lords death*, as the obſervation of the firſt day of the Week hath to his Reſurrection, therefore called the *Lords day.* Chriſt inſtituted this Ordinance for a ſolemn *remembrance of his Death* in the Churches *till he come the ſecond time.* And he did it the Night he was betrayed, after he had eat the Paſſover with his Diſciples, *Mat.* 26. 26. The Elements Bread and Wine, the Sacramental Actions are Bleſſing the Elements diſtinctly. 2. Breaking the Bread and pouring out the Wine. 3. The delivery of each to the people with the words of Command appropriated by the appointment of Chriſt. 4. The Order. 1. The Bread bleſſed, then broken, then diſtributed. 2. The Wine poured out, bleſſed, delivered forth; after this *a Pſalm or Hymn is Sung*, as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt did, and that Ordinance is ended. Tho' moſt Churches conclude with a ſhort Prayer, wherein Gods name is further bleſſed, & particular Caſes of the Aſſembly ſpread before the Lord, before which Prayer is uſual a liberal Collection for the Poor, and ſupport of Ordinances.

Phil. What is the great Uſe and Improvement

ment a Communicant may and ſhould make of his participation of this Ordinance?

Chriſt. 1. That as the Bread broken and Wine poured out ſignifie the Body and Soul ſufferings of the Lord Chriſt: they are exhibited in this Ordinance in a lively manner, to our thankful remembrance of Gods and Chriſts love to us; therefore by the ancients called the Euchariſt. 2. Hereby our acts of Faith are renewed, and our Faith greatly ſtrengthned in the love of God to us, in the Redemption wrought by Jeſus Chriſt for us in his Death and Suffering, for our preſent Juſtification and Sanctification, and Future Glory. 3. It is a ſign and Seal of our Union to, and Communion with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to one another; our Communion together by a common participation of Chriſt our Head in his perſonal Excellencies and myſtical Communications; as alſo our Communion in him one with another as a myſtical and viſible Politick Body. 4. It is a viſible Teſtimony and Profeſſion of our mutual love, and Obligations therein as members one of another. 5. There is a ſweet Communion in each others Gifts and Graces, in order to edification and growth in Grace.

Phil. To what Church Officer doth the adminiſtration of this Ordinance appertain?

Chriſt. It appertains to the Paſtoral teach-

ing Office, for the Seals are teaching Ceremonies, by way of Inſtruction unto us, for increaſe in Faith and Love, and by way of Conſolation and Confirmation in our right to Covenant Benefits and Priviledges. And hence it belongs primarily to the Paſtor that is principally called to the whole Office of feeding the flock, for Chriſt the great Paſtor firſt adminiſtred it. And ſecondarily to the Teacher who is called to bear a ſhare with him in his Teaching work, which is feeding the flock with wholeſome Doctrine, and adminiſtring ſuch inſtituted ſigns and ſeals as tends to the Confirmation thereof unto their Souls and Conſciences, and therefore where there is actually Paſtor and Teacher, it may for the eaſe of the Paſtor [that part of this Labour may be born by the Teacher] as well as that of teaching. And in caſe of the Death of the Paſtor the whole paſtoral charge as to Teaching and Adminiſtring falls upon the Teacher, unleſs the Church think meet to chooſe another Paſtor.

Phil. But I pray what do you think of the practice of our Miniſter, and if I miſtake not ſome Non-conformiſts uſe it ſtill, *viz.* for the Adminiſtrator or Adminiſtrators (for I have known ſeveral at the ſame time in one Congregation) to go about from Perſon to Perſon, and deliver the Bread and Wine into

to

to the hand of each, repeating as oft the Words of institution, *Take, eat,* &c. *Take, drink,* &c.

Christ. I take it to be an unscriptural usage, for *Luke* 22. 17. Christ said, *Take this and divide it among your selves.* And if it be said that is spoken of the Passover Cup, it makes not against us, for in the same manner as that Cup went about, did also the Bread and Wine that followed. And we have no ground to suppose that he delivered the Bread with the Words, *This is my Body, take eat, nor the Wine, &c.* any more than once. Again it's plain, that this practice came from *Rome,* from that blasphemous Heresie of theirs, that the Bread is the very Body of Christ after Consecration of the Priest; and therefore not to be touched by the Communicant, but put into his Mouth by the supposed sacred Hands of the Priest. Therefore it hath the same Idolatrous Original as Kneeling in receiving hath, nourisheth much vain Superstition in the people, makes the Ordinance most tedious and troublesome, if not too Comical.

Phil. You mention Kneeling; methinks that seems to be a comely gesture enough in so solemn and sacred an Ordinance, though I confess I am not for imposing of it.

Christ. I need not tell you the reason and ground of that Innovation, *viz.* From the Idolatrous

Idolatrous worſhiping the Bread. And I need not tell you that the poſture in receiving was not ſo from the beginning, but after the eaſtern manner of ſitting at a Feaſt. It is not proper or comely to kneel at a Feaſt which is for a ſociable rejoycing. Kneeling is a poſture of proſtration in Prayer, but this is a diſtinct Ordinance from Prayer, though it be bleſſed by Prayer. The Prayer is over when the Element is diſtributed and then our buſineſs is not to pray, but to feed in a Feaſting Sacramental and Spiritual manner. Neither is the practice of ſome Communicants to be commended, who after the Element is bleſſed by the Prayers of the Congregation betake themſelves to their particular private prayers before they eat or drink; it's a new Conſecration, as if the Element were not ſufficiently conſecrated. Or as if they were to receive in an act of Prayer. Whereas now they are to receive their ſpiritual food to the ſatisfaction of their hungring and thirſting Souls, with rejoycing and gladneſs of Heart, making it the Bread of Conſolation and cup of Salvation; praiſing the Name of the Lord. The Nature of receiving clearly appears from this, that it is a Feaſt of Remembrance, and therein for ſpiritual Repaſt, Nouriſhment and Conſolation, and it appears in that the diſtribution of the [illegible] Element ends

ends with a Pſalm or Hymn of praiſe before we ariſe from the Table, and therefore to be performed in the ſame poſture we were in, when we received the Cup, and we uſe not a kneeling poſture in ſinging.

Phil. I have read many conſiderable Arguments indeed againſt this poſture in receiving, which gives ground to ſuſpect there is too much of Superſtition in it; and that it was derived from *Rome*, but I have not before conſidered what you ſay of its great diſagreement to the very Nature of the Ordinance, the Act of receiving being a diſtinct duty from praying, and therefore I believe many that profeſs to more Knowledge in theſe things than I do, do they know not what, in betaking themſelves to private Prayers, when they ſhould be exerciſed after another manner, and ſo do unduly mix one Ordinance with another, or thruſt out one ſpiritual duty by another. I am glad you mention it to me. I hope it will be matter of good inſtruction to me in my practice for the future.

Chriſt. I am glad to find your Heart ſo moulded, by the Grace of God that you are ready to receive the impreſſion of Truth. It was otherwiſe not long ago.

Phil. I think the next Head of Church Ordinances, which you mentioned, were the Keys; I pray ſpeak to them.

Chriſt.

Christ. By Keys I mean Church power of *opening and ſhutting.* It is a Scripture Word, but Metaphorical. A Key is uſed in reſpect *of ſpiritual Knowledge*, or in reſpect of Power. In reſpect of Knowledge, *Luke* 11.52. In this reſpect *Peter* had the Key of the Kingdom of Heaven committed to him as an Apoſtle, as is ſpoken by our Saviour, *Mat.* 16. 19. Being the firſt Apoſtle inſtructed by God to open the door for preaching the Goſpel unto the *Gentiles*, *Act.* 10. But this Key, tho' firſt turned in exerciſe by *Peter*, was given to the reſt of the Apoſtles at the ſame time, and with them to all faithful Miniſters. There is another Key of the Kingdom of Heaven, which is in the Church of the Goſpel, *viz. The Key of Power*, which is either of Supream Church-power, and is the Power of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt which is Soveralgn, Abſolute, Legiſlative, and therefore called the Key of *David*, which he alone hath, *Rev.* 3.7. And there is the Key of ſubordinate Power which is delegated by Chriſt unto his Church, and therefore given by Chriſt unto *Peter*, and the reſt of the Diſciples, as his aſſociated Church on Earth; to which he himſelf was Paſtor, and to which he adminiſtred as ſuch the *Lords Supper*. The twelve Apoſtles had this Key given them as ſuch, in that for their time they had all Church Power committed unto

to them, did exercise it as occasion required, as to Constitution of Officers, receiving, dismissing or excommunicating members. But there being none in Succession unto them, this Key of Power can be found no where lodged but in a particular Congregation built on the Faith which *Peter* in the Name of the rest professed, *Mat.* 16. 19.

Phil. But the great Question is where the Power of the Keys lyes in a particular Congregation, whether in the Fraternity, or in the Eldership.

Christ. I call the decisive Church Power the Key, and say it lyes in the Majority, as in all Societies that arise by mutual Consent or Agreement. But I distinguish between the *Keys* and the *management* of them, for a Key is dead, and opens no door if there be not a hand to make use of it. So that in an Organized Church, the orderly managing and making use of the Churches Power lyeth in the Elders. But if the Church be not Organized, they are guided by a common rule of self-preservation, and using all means to procure their well being, they act by common consent, as they came together in the Name of Christ, till they be duely Organized with Officers. And therefore they admit members or excommunicate, if necessity require, as they may before they have Offi-

cers. But having choſen Officers the orderly way of proceeding is, by the authbritative Power of the Officers in management of this Key, which is the deciſive Power. Hence I diſtinguiſh between a Churches acting *pro neceſſitate*, and *pro regula ordinis*.

Phil. What part have the ruling Elders, *viz.* the Paſtor if there be no more, or if there be, the ruling Presbyters that take part with him, as aſſiſtants in admitting of a Member.

Chriſt. The Elder or Elders work is, 1. To ſpeak with the party that deſires admiſſion, propound him to the Church, and upon mature deliberation cauſe the deciſive Vote of the Church to paſs upon him. Whereby he is received or rejected. If received, the Elder declares the ſence of the Church, and doth ſolemnly in the Name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the Church, enter into a mutual obligation with the ſaid Member, ſaying; *You are here now to give up your ſelf, and Children, (if he hath any,) to the Lord, and this Congregation, promiſing (as Chriſt ſhall help you) to walk and abide in, and with this Church in all Goſpel Converſation, according to the rules of Faith and order of the Goſpel, ſubmitting your ſelf to the watch of the ſame, and promiſe to bring your Children to the Ordinances of the Church, educating them in the nurture and admonition*

of

of the Lord. Likewise adds, *I do in the Name of Christ and this Congregation, give you the right hand of fellowship, and receive you in the Lord, promising to perform all the duties toward you that are required of us in order to your Edification, as Christ shall enable us.*

Phil Hath an Elder no more part in the decisive Power by Vote than an ordinary Brother?

Christ. Though the Elders Judgment is usually hearkened to, and sways many times much with the Congregation, giving light unto them from the Word, yet when a matter comes by Vote to be determined, his Vote is but single as another Brothers, and therefore we say this Key of decisive power is in the Fraternity, though the orderly management thereof, and *authoritative declaration thereof* in the Name of Christ belongeth to the Elder.

Phil. In what other Cases is this Key made use of?

Christ. In letting, shutting out, and turning out of Members. 1. In Letting out, or translating Members from one Church to another, when upon good reasons a Church Member desires to change his or her Communion, and asketh a Dismission, it is granted by the suffrage of the Church approving his reasons for it.

Phil. Is there any Scripture ground for a Diſmiſſion? may not a Church Member not chargeable with any ſcandalous Sin go away to another Church without a Diſmiſſion?

Chriſt. No! For it will cauſe Confuſion in the Churches, and *God is the God of Order, and not Confuſion, as in all the Churches of the Saints.* Beſides, it's contrary to the Nature of ſuch Societies, and the obligation by which the Members ſtand mutually bound together in one Body. And Chriſt hath provided as well the orderly departure as ſtay of Church Members. The word συνίστημι uſed, *Rom.* 16. 1. ſhould be rendred *ſtatuo, conſtituo in cœtu vobiſcum*, I diſmiſs to you, for tho' our tranſlators render it, I recommend, yet it ſhould more rightly be rendred, I diſmiſs or place in Church fellowſhip with you; and ſo all the Apoſtle ſpeaks afterward, are terms of a diſmiſſion. Theſe *Paul* needs not he being an Apoſtle, and having had a Seal of his Apoſtleſhip among them, συστατικαὶ ἐπιστολαι, are commendatory Letters with Diſmiſſion, 2 *Cor.* 3. 2.

Phil. What then are your Letters of Recommendation?

Chriſt. A Letter of Recommendation is but a Certificate under the hand of an Officer, that this or that Brother or Siſter is a Member of ſuch a Congregation, walking blame-

blameleſly, and as becomes the Goſpel, that when any Brother or Siſter comes to other Churches in their travels, they may make no ſcruple to receive them to occaſional or tranſient Communion, but transfers not any as Members to another Congregation.

Phil. How is the Key uſed for Excluſion of a Member?

Chriſt. A Church Member is excluded or put out of Communion *by Himſelf* or *by the Church*, and either amounts to Excommunication, for *Excommunication is the putting one out of the Communion of a particular Congregation*; which is done when a Member doth diſorderly withdraw and divide himſelf from the Church Communion, obſtinately refuſing to be reduced to his place and duty in the ſaid Church. This is an uſurpation of the Key of Power, and ſeparating of himſelf; and I call it *Indirect Excommunication*, becauſe he divides himſelf violently and ſchiſmatically; upon which the Church is to reaſſume the Key and ſhut the door of Communion upon him, either by a *direct Excommunication* which is the regular way, and may be juſtified from expreſs places of Scripture, ſuch as *Rom.* 16. 17, 18. Or elſe if this way of Diſcipline will not be born, *Judicially* to remark by the deciſive Power of the Church, and declare that ſuch an one hath ſinfully or

diſorderly withdrawn and divided himſelf from the Communion of the Church, whereby he muſt immediately be looked upon *as Eccleſiaſtically felo de ſe*, and one cut off from the Communion of the Churches of Chriſt; being ſeparated from that Congregation to which he did belong. For he that challengeth Communion with other Churches, can do it but as a Member of one particular Church, from which being divided by his act, having diſclaimed it, and ſecluded, thereupon by the act of the Church, he is doubly excommunicate, and hath no ground to claim right of Communion any where: but is as a dead branch cut off, *a Tree twice dead* (in reſpect of his viſible Church-ſtanding) *and plucked up by the roots.*

Phil. I am glad to underſtand that in the way of Church diſcipline you do profeſs to, there is a regular way of proceeding to curb ſuch kind of diſturbers of Churches, for it's eaſier to correct thoſe who are chargeable with *ſcandal*. For ſuch make parties, divide Churches, and depart from their Communion bidding defiance to all Rule and Government, and that out of a pretence of Conſcience. Now the way you ſpeak of, would tend much to the humbling ſuch proud and prejudiced profeſſors, who under pretence of ſerving Chriſt, ſerve not the Lord Jeſus, but their own

own Lusts, which to gratifie, they regard not the defaming and breaking the best Churches on Earth. But other Churches and Elders will countenance, abett and receive them, as I have known some do.

Christ. I must acknowledge it, to our great sorrow and shame, that is, of some Elders and Churches, that will be still taking part with the offenders, and censured Members of other Churches, and have no Conscience of the violation of the Communion of Churches, but there is not many of them. It cannot be expected, but as among a great many Churches some will be disorderly and unruly; so among many Churches some will be of that nature, and become Commonshores for Mammon sake, to all lawless ungovernable Members of other Congregations. But a little more of this when we come to speak of the Communion of Churches.

Phil. What is that which you call *direct Excommunication*?

Christ. It is when the Church by its decisive power adjudgeth a person an impenitent obstinate offender, or grosly scandalous, layeth him under a sentence of Excommunication.

Phil. What Rules are there to proceed by, in that case?

Chriſt. There are two ſorts of Offences to be proceeded upon, and accordingly are the Rules of proceeding. 1. Caſes of leſs hainous nature, and privately committed, as one Brother's ſinning againſt another in lying, defrauding, purloining, *&c.* and ſo ſins not publickly known, not being ſo criminal and hainous. In this kind of offences Chriſt hath laid us down the degrees of proceeding, and if at laſt he is not convinced of his ſin, when the Church adjudgeth there is abundant ground of conviction laid before him, it is to proceed to cenſure, and he is to be looked upon as a Heathen or Publican, that hath no right to Church-priviledges. 2. There are ſome ſins hainous, more criminal, publickly committed and known to the World, ſuch as Blaſphemy, Drunkenneſs, Whoredom, Perjury, *&c.* Theſe ſins are not to be dallied with in a gradual way of proceeding, for they go before the ſinner to Judgment, and ſuch are immediately to be proceeded againſt to Excommunication. 1. Becauſe it was ſo practiſed in the caſe of the inceſtuous perſon by the command of the Apoſtle, 1 *Cor.* 5. 2. It is requiſite it ſhould be ſo for the vindication of the honour of Chriſt and his Church before the World. 3. That whatever pretences there are of preſent remorſe,

morſe, it is not meet ſuch a perſon ſhould be permitted to abide an actual Church Member under the reproach of ſuch a Sin, without ſuffering the utmoſt cenſure, ſo long time as is requiſite to ſatisfie the Church of the dueneſs of his remorſe and truth of his repentance. The dealing with the inceſtuous perſon after Excommunication, is a rule to Churches to walk by in the like caſes.

Phil. The receiving in, of an Excommunicated perſon upon due Repentance, is alſo by the deciſive power of the Church.

Chriſt. It is ſo, for it is the ſame Key that opens to caſt out and ſhut the Door, and therefore muſt open it again, to let in the Penitent Sinner upon his Repentance.

Phil. For what Sins is a perſon to be Excommunicated? Some of your perſuaſion ſay not for any but hainous crimes, ſuch as the light of Nature condemns, as Murther, Adultery, Theft, Blaſphemy. And the Acts of thoſe ſins muſt be clearly proved too, any ſcandalous actions leading to theſe ſins, will not bear the dreadful ſentence of Excommunication: As for example, words of threatning and revenge, and actions manifeſtly ſuch, laſcivious carriages, keeping ill and wicked company, purloyning, overreaching, cheating, equivocating, lying; theſe

are

are not ſins with them to be excommunicated for, nor any ſins of omiſſion. As for example, never to pray in a family, or read the Word, *&c.* nor for great errours.

Chriſt. I muſt confeſs I have much wondred upon what grounds ſome men ſpeak and write in this caſe. But I find it moſtly was thoſe that prudentially made this plea an evaſion to excuſe themſelves from the exerciſing of any cenſure upon any Church-Member, eſpecially from queſtioning and dealing with any rich and honourable for any ſin. For Paſtors are hereby pretty well ſecured upon this account from this trouble, ſo long as there is none to be excommunicated, but ſuch as are burnt in the Hand at the Old Baily, or whipt at the Carts Tail, or condemn'd to be Hang'd at *Tiburn.* But we have not this limitation from the Spirit of God, but from corrupt man, for there is no ſin ſpecified, *Mat.* 18. yea any manifeſt ſin is ſuppoſed by that text to be cauſe enough of Excommunication, if a manifeſt impenitency be found in the offender, and he be not by any due means to be reduced and brought to a ſight and ſenſe of the ſin he is charged with, and there is ſufficient proof of it. As for ſins of ordinary infirmity they are watched againſt to be corrected by the brotherly admonitions of others and fre-

frequently bewail'd by our selves, but not made the causes of Church censures.

Phil. In case one come under the censure of Excommunication, in what form and manner is it usually denounced in your Churches?

Christ. In the very Words, which the Apostle *Paul* commanded the *Corinthians* to Excommunicate the Incestuous Person, 1 *Cor.* 5.

Phil. Is not that a dreadful curse to deliver one to Satan for the Destruction of the flesh, *&c.* I pray what doth these words import?

Christ. The Sentence is very terrible and awful, but it's for a good and desirable end, *viz.* The recovery of a Sinner from Sin, and saving his Soul, the words which you mention are of marvellous spiritual signification. To deliver over to Satan is as much as our Saviour (by whose Spirit the Apostle enjoyns the use of this word) expresseth, *Mat.* 18. that such an one should be accounted as an excommunicate Person was by the Church of the *Jews*, or as one out of that Churches Communion, *viz.* An Heathen, or Publican, for such the *Jews* would not eat with, and condemned our Saviour for so doing. There are but two Kingdoms in the World; Christs, and Satans, who is called the Prince of the World,

World, that *ruleth in the Children of diſobedience*, i. e. the *Sons of Belial*, men that will not come under the yoke of Chriſts Government; and with ſuch Chriſt can have no concord in his Church, 2 *Cor.* 6. 15. And therefore to be put out of the Viſible Church as *a Child of Diſobedience*, an incorrigible perſon, hardened in ſin, and to be returned into the World as one that hath no right *to the Childrens Bread*: And this is to be a means to humble him, and bring him to ſhame and godly ſorrow, ſo that his fleſh (a Goſpel expreſſion for ſin, which is corrupt affections and luſts) may be deſtroyed, and that his Soul may be ſaved in the day of Chriſt. And the conſequent behaviour required towards ſuch an one abundantly ſhews it, that intimacy of familiarity is not to be kept with him, 1 *Cor.* 5. 11. And that ſuch a Perſon is to be put away from Communion in this manner, as to all ſacred things peculiar to the Church, *ver.* 13. And what doth the Apoſtle intend, 2 *Theſ.* 3. 14. but the Excommunication of one that is *unruly*, that he may be aſhamed; for it is ſetting a mark upon him that others may withdraw from him to his great ſhame, but yet *ver.* 15. to take all opportunities to admoniſh him in order to his recovery.

Phil. What rules are to be obſerved in the

the Denunciation of this solemn Sentence?

Christ. All the rules of Christ according to the Nature of the offence being private, or publick, ought to be observed, that all due deliberation be used, and tenderness towards the offending Brother, before the case be put to the suffrage of the Church. That being passed, and the Offender convict as guilty, and ripe for censure, the sin is to be laid open with all the aggravations thereof. Then the nature of the Sentence, and the true end and intent thereof shewed. Solemn Prayer is to be made by way of Humiliation to the Church, and Supplication, for the Conviction, Repentance, and Humiliation of the Sinner, that the Ordinance may obtain it's true and best effect upon him. Lastly, The Sentence is to be denounced solemnly in the Name of Christ, by a ruling Elder, if any, if none, by the Pastor; and then the Ordinance is to be concluded with Prayer of Gods blessing of it unto the Sinner, for his return, and for the Church, that God would preserve it from Impurities, Apostacies and Decays in Grace, and that the fall of this Brother may be a warning Example, that *He that stands do take heed lest he fall.*

Phil. Is there not a lesser Excommunication, which an offending Brother may be tryed

ed with before you proceed to this great and tremendous one?

Christ. There is with some, that which they call *Suspension*, but I know no ground for it from the word, for a man that is an adult Member hath right to all Ordinances, or not, and right he hath still, till he be duely convict, and sentence passed upon him. And I know no Power that any Church or Officer hath to debar him from any Ordinance of Church Communion, till he be excluded judicially in the Name of Christ.

Phil. You are ready to receive an Excommunicate Person again upon credible manifestation of his Repentance.

Christ. There ought to be great readiness to receive a repenting and returning Sinner with all Tenderness, Compassion, and Commiseration, but with a due regard to the Honour of Christ, his Church and Ordinance, to endeavour to get as much satisfaction as may be, concerning the Truth and Sincerity of his professed Repentance, not only by manifested remorse, but in some Cases by experienced Reformation.

Phil. You were saying that one that is an unjust divider from the Communion of the Church, ought to be excommunicated by a direct Excommunication.

Christ. I do verily believe it's the mind and

and will of Christ, and though our Churches, that are now but in a declining state as to matters of Order, will not receive it, yet Churches have practised it; and whenever the Churches flourish they will practise it. My Reasons are briefly, 1. That it is Schism of the highest nature, being the actual dividing of a particular Congregation; and there is no other Schism spoken of in Scripture; that in the Church of *Corinth* was but Factions tending to this Division, else the Apostle would have given command to excommunicate the causers thereof, as well as the incestuous Person. For the contentions and factions that had a tendency thereto they were highly rebuked, 1 *Cor.* 1. 11, 12. *ch.* 3. 3. 1 *Cor.* 11. 18. 2. What way is for marking and withdrawing from a Person, but the Sentence of Excommunication? *Rom.* 16. 17. 1 *Thes.* 5. 14. 2 *Thes.* 3. 14. 3. It's a most scandalous Sin to *Jew*, *Gentile*, and Church of Christ; nothing stains the Honour of Christ more in the Congregation. 4. It's a root of bitterness that infects many, and ought to be plucked up by censure, if it cannot be cured, *Heb.* 12. 15. 5. To excommunicate such a person is no wrong, because he hath excommunicated himself, he hath but what he sought after, and hath done. 6. It's fit such an one should be excommunicated judicially, be-

becauſe he hath by uſurpation excommunicated himſelf and the Church. 7. It's plain it's a ſin and ſuch an one wherein he heareth not the Church, and therefore to be made as an Heathen and Publican. 8. It's a groſs breach of his Covenant at entrance into Church Communion.

Phil. Speak ſomething now of the fifth Head of Ordinances, which is Contribution to the ſupport of Ordinances, Miniſtry, and the neceſſity of the Saints.

Chriſt. Contribution on theſe accounts are manifeſtly the Office charge of the Deacons, to call the Church to it's Duty in this kind, and to take care for the faithful diſtribution of all Collections of this Nature, and to give account thereof to the Church. They are herein the Churches Stewards, it's fully manifeſt from the firſt inſtitution of that Office, *Acts 6.* and by their neceſſary qualifications ſpoken of, 1 *Tim.* 3. 8. Now the reaſon of this Office and Ordinance, is not only the Goſpel Inſtitution, which from the places forementioned are without diſpute, but from the Nature of the Church Society it ſelf No Societies, if but civil, can be ſupported according to their Nature without charge, and there are many charges neceſſarily required to ſupport a Church Society, for a Miniſtry muſt be maintained, 1 *Cor.* 9. 9, 10, 11, 12.

10, 11, 12. 1 *Tim.* 5. 17, 18. *Gal.* 6. 6. *Luke* 10. 4. Likewiſe there is charges as to places for the Church to aſſemble and meet in. The Primitive Churches aſſembled in upper rooms of ordinary Houſes, *Act.* 1. 13. ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ὑπερῶον, they went up into an upper room. And *Paul* preached in his own hired houſe, *Act.* 28. 30, 31. The Churches were at the charge of hiring places to meet in, and ſo have been ever ſince the Profeſſion of Chriſtian Religion, they are built, or hired. There are Elements for the Lords Table, which are matter of charge. There are the Poor to be ſupported and relieved. And that it was the practice of the Churches to have frequent Collections, for theſe ends and purpoſes is beyond all diſpute, 2 *Cor.* 9. 1. 1 *Cor.* 16. 1, 2. The time and manner for making theſe Collections ſeems to be left to the prudent Conſideration of each Church, as may be moſt agreeable to it's circumſtances, though *Paul* ſeems to intimate to the *Corinthians* that the firſt day of the week, when the Church aſſembleth, is a ſuitable and meet time for it. As for the adminiſtration of other Ordinances of Chriſt, and the proportion that every one is bound in Conſcience to give to all ſuch occaſions of Contribution, is from time to time, as God hath proſpered him, and the manner ſpecified: *He that giveth, with ſim-*

plicity, he that sheweth Mercy with chearfulness, Rom. 12. 8.

Phil. You seem to add one thing more to be observed and practised in Churches, as an Ordinance of Christ for Edification, the frequent assembling of the Church for Prayer, and Conference.

Christ. Whatever may have a manifest tendency to Edification is undoubtedly required, and is to be practised in a Church of Christ. This assembling of the Church all together, or in parts, or neighbourhoods doth undoubtedly do so; and if there were no other place of Scripture to be pleaded for it, that is enough to encourage it, *Mal.* 3. 16, 17. But the Apostle seems, *Heb.* 10. 24, 25. to lay frequent assemblings in this kind, as a great charge upon the Churches of Christ. And we find that there was a practice of this nature frequent in the Primitive Churches, when Brethren spake by way of Exhortation in Conference one with another, and it was called *prophesying*, 1 *Cor.* 14. 3, 4, 5. And it's plain that it was but speaking and praying in this manner of the Brethren, for the edifying of the Church; and to this practice doth the Apostles discourse, 1 *Cor.* 11. 2, 3. 4, *&c.* seem plainly to look.

Phil. How were those meetings for Conference or mutual Edification managed?

Christ.

Christ. It was by Brethrens speaking one after another (not several talking of spiritual matters in the same room in divers Companies, as it was before that the Apostle corrected that disorder, 1 *Cor.* 14. 29.) But the regular way of carrying it on is that one speak at once, and the rest judge, *viz.* That a practical question be propounded, and two or three or more speak briefly in answer thereto one after another; & if that an Officer should be there, or one appointed in chief to Judge, & to review the Consonancy to Truth of what is spoken then. Let others submit thereto according to the light brought, 1 *Cor.* 14. 30.

CHAP. VII. *Of Communion of Churches.*

Phil. IS the Supream Jurisdiction Ecclesiastical in every particular Congregation? Is there none Superiour to appeal to, Episcopal or Classical?

Christ. None but Christ himself. For all Churches are coordinate in Power one with another, nextly and immediately under Christ; neither hath Christ constituted any Officers with Apostolick Power over many Churches.

Phil. But what if matter of difficulty arise, ought not Elders of neighbouring Churches to assemble and decide it?

Christ. There are two sorts of things wherein matters of Controversie do usually lye, 1. There may be a case *in Thesi* which to understand the Mind of God clearly in, is of great concernment to the Church: and if the Pastor and other Officers cannot sufficiently satisfie the Mind of the Brethren, then it's requisite to consult other Churches and Elders; who when they give their Judgment in the Case, it is no further binding, than it carries the light of Truth with it; for no Elders can impose any rule of practice upon the Churches: and their Judgment hath no more force than Ministerial; so far as carrying the Authority of Christ in his declared Mind and Will. Here then it's very necessary and requisite, that in matters of greater and weightier concern other Churches should be acquainted and consulted. Other things are referrible all to matter of fact in elections, admissions, translations, and exclusions And here the Church is the supream Judge, and none to be appealed to. Why should not a Church of Christ be as able to judge in any case of this Nature, as well as a Jury in Civil Affairs to whose Judgment, as to matter of fact our Lives and Estates are left daily. Therefore if we hold the distinction *de jure & de facto*, this matter of the Jurisdiction of Churches will be clear. In

cases

caſes *de jure*, a Church can be led only by the beſt light they can have; and the more the better, and knowing this they have a foundation to proceed upon in matter of fact, whereupon the binding and looſing lyes in themſelves.

Phil. What if a Member or Minor part of a Church think themſelves wronged upon the ſuppoſed irregular proceedings of the Majority?

Chriſt. He or they may complain to another Church. That Church is to hear what the Siſter Church ſaith in vindication. If it ſatisfie not, nor is convinced of it's error, then another Church (*i. e.* the Elders with Meſſengers thereof) to deal with the offending Church. And if it hear not, then the caſe is to be brought before the vicinity of Churches. All which finding this Church juſtly chargeable with ſin, and incorrigible therein, agree to declare Non-communion with it, which is virtually an Excommunication, for the rule of Churches dealing with each others is of the ſame nature, as that, *Mat.* 18. where a rule is laid down by our Saviour for the orderly proceeding of one Church Member with another.

Phil. What if an Elder fall under offence in a Church; is it in the power of that Church to deal with him, as with an ordinary Brother?

Chriſt. There is no doubt of it, the Juriſdiction is in the Church as to Officers, who are Brethren, as well as to others, and the manner of proceeding is the ſame; but an accuſation againſt an Elder is not preſently to be received, it muſt be clearly evidenced by two or three Witneſſes. Again, in ſuch caſes it's good for the Church to proceed with the advice and approbation (if poſſible) of other Neighbouring Churches and Elders.

Phil. Wherein conſiſts the practical part of Communion of Churches?

Chriſt. 1. A concurrence in principles of Faith and Order. 2. In giving each other the Right Hand of Fellowſhip. As, 1. In receiving each others Members unto tranſient Communion, as due occaſion requires. 2. In diſmiſſing Members to each others, or receiving Members orderly diſmiſſed. 3. In refuſal to admit ſuch to Communion, which are under the cenſure of another Church or diſorderly withdrawn from it, ſignification being made thereof. 3. There is Communion of Churches in mutual advice and counſel, which ſhould be maintained by Elders frequent aſſembling and meeting together for this end and purpoſe. 4. By ſympathizing with each others Poverty and Afflictions, by relieving and ſupporting as much as poſſible ſuch as labour in this kind.

And

And this is a Communion in giving and receiving, as the Apoſtle calls it.

Phil. Is there not a Communion of Churches in the office power of the Elders, *v. gr.* for one Paſtor to adminiſter the Lords Supper in another, and for the Elders of one or more Congregations to ordain Elders in another.

Chriſt. Officers have a peculiar relation to the Society that hath called them, and there only they are ſuch, and that ſociety only can conſtitute and ordain them, and there only they can exerciſe their particular Office charge. As a Paſtor can adminiſter the Lords Supper only in the Church to which he is overſeer; neither the ruling Elder can govern, nor the Deacon hath power to diſtribute any where but where he is a Deacon, or hath that Office charge committed to him, for if the Officer of one Church were thereby made an indefinite Officer to all, it would ſoon bring confuſion to all, and the Elders of one Church might excommunicate in another.

Phil. I thank you Sir, for this brief account you have given me of your Church Order. As for the Ordinances of Chriſts inſtitution I think all reformed Churches own them more or leſs, and the Romaniſts themſelves in their way, though with innumerable Superſtitions and Idolatrous additions. And for the Church Officers you inſiſt on, methinks

I ſee there is ſomething analogous to them remaining in our parochial Churches, which hath been handed down from the primitive practice through Antichriſtian Darkneſs. As in ſome of our Pariſhes we have the Parſon as Paſtor, the Aſſiſtant in Preaching, as the Teacher, the Church Wardens as ruling Elders, the overſeers of the Poor as Deacons. and though theſe labour under many abuſes now, and irregularities by Popiſh corruptions, yet it ſhews that theſe are the Officers that do fully anſwer the neceſſity of a Chriſtian Congregation, and that if it be large none of them can well be ſpared.

Chap. VIII. *Of Letters of Commendation and Diſcommendation.*

Phil. BEfore we break up this conference, I pray inform me of the manner of tranſlating of a Church Member from one Church to another. I have heard ſome ſay there is no difference between Letters of recommendation and of diſmiſſion.

Chriſt. I have told you a Letter of recommendation is but a Certificate under an Elders Hand, that ſuch an one is a Church Member, and orderly walker, in order to his free admiſſion, to occaſional Communion with other Churches; it need not be a

Church

Church Act. 2. It's not in order to the parting with a Member. 3. It need not be directed to any particular Congregation. 4. When Members of each Congregation are well known to one another, they are needleſs, as the Apoſtle ſaith of himſelf, 2 *Cor.* 3. 1, 2. we need not [συσταλικῶν ἐπιστολῶν] Letters of Commendation to you?

Phil. I pray in what form doth a Letter of Commendation run?

Chriſt. It may be in theſe or ſuch like words.

To the Churches of Chriſt and their reſpective Elders, to whom theſe preſents ſhall come, Grace, Mercy and Peace, *&c.*

SEeing God by his Providence hath called this our Brother. A. B. *to be converſant in places remote from us for a time, and that he may reap the comfort of Chriſtian Communion in Goſpel Ordinances, in any places whither he is lawfully called, and where any Church of Chriſt is planted, by vertue of Communion of Churches; Theſe are to certifie that this our Brother,* A. B. *is under no cenſure, but in actual Communion with us, hath walked in all Chriſtian and Holy Converſation, as becomes the Faith and Order of the Goſpel, to the great honour of Chriſt, and our rejoycing. Wherefore you need not doubt to give him the Right Hand of Fellowſhip in occaſional Communion,*

tion, whensoever he shall desire the same. We greet you well in the Lord. C. D. Pastor.

Phil. Is not this sufficient for to translate a Member to another Church, and make him an actual Member there?

Christ. No, this makes him not a Member of any one Church more than another. 2. Here the Church to which he belongs, gives up no right in him. Neither doth any Church act pass to that purpose, or is desired by him. The end of this, is but to be a Testimonial to other Churches, that they may know him to be a Church Member, and one under no censure but approved, and therefore that no other Churches may scruple to admit him to their Communion as occasion shall require.

Phil. I pray then how do you write a dismission, some dismiss Members but to no Church.

Christ. It may be wrote with these or such like expressions, as the matter requires, for in some cases variation is required.

Phil. What are those cases?

Christ. I will tell you. Some dismissions cannot be wrote with so great commendation, as others may, some departing Members giving considerable cause of offence in their carriages, toward the Church and Ministry before, and in their asking dismission.

Phil.

Phil. How do you write a diſmiſſion with commendation?

Chriſt. A diſmiſſion with commendation may be after this manner, and it muſt be directed to a particular Church.

To the Church of Chriſt [in ſuch a place] to which the Reverend Mr. *L. P.* is Paſtor, Grace, Mercy, *&c.*

Dearly beloved in the Lord,

WHereas F. D. *a Brother in fellowſhip with us, hath walked in all good Conſcience and Holy Converſation, as becometh the Goſpel and his profeſſion, continuing ſtedfaſtly in attendance on all the Ordinances of Chriſt in this Congregation; And now having conſulted us, and given us reaſons why he apprehends it his duty to ask his diſmiſſion: Which reaſons being duely conſidered by us, and approved as ſatisfactory: we think it no leſs our duty to grant his ſaid requeſt, and do hereby diſmiſs him unto you, diſcharging him from his nearer relation, and obligation unto us, and commit him to your particular watch and care, deſiring you to receive him in the Lord, and that you will be every way helpful to him, to promote his edification and comfort. For which Spiritual ends, we commend you, and him with you, to the word of his Grace who is able to build you up, and give you an inheritance*

heritance among them that are ſanctified.

Subſcribed by the conſent and in the name of the Church of Chriſt, at *K.* by *A. N.* Paſtor.

Phil. But what kind of diſmiſſion can you give without commendation?

Chriſt. There muſt be ſome in every one, and charity allows us to give ſome commendation to a Member that ſtands under very diſſatisfactory circumſtances, which we hope proceed from his infirmity only, and therefore can ſay thus much, *That we hope he partakes of the free Grace of God in Chriſt, though at preſent labours under theſe or thoſe infirmities. And though his reaſons for his departure do no way ſatisfie us, yet ſeeing he cannot be otherwiſe perſwaded, we have granted his diſmiſſion in order to his contentment and our peace.* But indeed ſmall or no commendation does in theſe caſes, for there is ſeldom any ſuch departer but the Paſtor of ſome other Church, is prepared for the receiving him right or wrong, with commendation or without, yea with diſmiſſion or without, for all is Fiſh that comes to Net with ſome men.

Phil. Yea they ſay there are ſome Paſtors will receive Members that run away from other Churches, although they be actually certified that they be under cenſure. Do you uſe to ſend Letters of diſcommendation to

Churches

Churches concerning offending Members?

Chriſt. Yes, there is as much or more reaſon for it, than for a letter of commendation. For as it concerns a Church to know who it admits to Communion, or rejects, ſo it's requiſite that a due Character be given by the Church, to which the Member belongs. And there is no particular Congregation, will offer to receive a perſon into ſtated Communion, at leaſt, without conſulting the Church to which he belongs, unleſs it be ſuch a Church as ſavours too much of an *Algerine* Spirit in Eccleſiaſtick affairs.

Phil. Have you ſeen ever any Letters Diſcommendatory ſent from one Church to another? Shew me if you have.

Chriſt. Yes I can ſhew you one. And ſuch a Letter need not be a Church act no more than a bare Letter of Commendation. It may be done by an Elder only, and he is bound by his Office to certifie unto other Churches, what capacity a Member is in, whether under cenſure or no. For when an offending Member is brought under the cenſure of a Church, other Churches ought to be acquainted with it, that they may not be impoſed upon, and that he may be aſhamed, being rejected by the unanimous concurrence of all Churches.

A Letter of Diſcommendation, may be to this purpoſe:
To all the Churches of Chriſt, in particular to that whereto *S. T.* is Paſtor.

WHereas E. F. *hath been a Member of this our* Congregation, *and having fallen by a ſcandalous Sin,* — *or an offence for which he hath been duely proceeded with according to the rules of the Goſpel, but remaining impenitent is to our great grief and humiliation, juſtly brought under the dreadful Sentense of Excommunication.* — Or, *Whereas* F. B. *hath for ſo long time withdrawn himſelf from the Communion of the Church of* Chriſt *in* E. *whereof he was a Member, to the long diſtraction, and great grief thereof, and doth perſiſt in his withdrawment, notwithſtanding all due means, which hath been uſed with all tenderneſs, patience and condeſcention for the reclaiming of him from the ſaid diſorderly walking: And that you may not be impoſed upon by ſuch an one, offering himſelf to partake with you at the Lords Table, and that the Violation of the* Communion *of Churches may be prevented, as well as the further hardening of an offender in ſin; Theſe are to ſignifie to you that the ſaid perſon above-named, is fallen under the cenſure of this* Congregation, *aforetime, therefore according to the known and*

avowed rules of the Goſpel, he can be no longer allowed a juſt claim to Communion *with other* Churches, *by vertue of any relation to, or right by and under the ſaid* Church, *or of any other pretences whatſoever, whilſt he ſtands thus divided from it as hath been declared. But that the God of all Grace will encline his Heart to return to his Duty is the unfeigned deſire and prayer of the* Congregation, *and of him eſpecially, who is your unworthy Brother and Servant in Chriſt Jeſus,* A. B. *Paſtor.*

Phil. I thank you for your readineſs to ſatisfie me in theſe points, wherein I am now made ſenſible through Grace, the honour of God and a Chriſtians fixed comfort, is moſt exceedingly concerned. I ſhall exerciſe your Patience at this time no longer, but wait another opportunity, when we may further diſcourſe ſome points of this nature.

Chriſt. Sir, you ſhall always find me (God aſſiſting) moſt ready and chearful in any ſervice of this nature. And though theſe things ſeem moſt ſtrange to moſt men, and of an abſtruſe nature, yet the time is coming when all the great truths of the Goſpel ſhall be cleared up before the World. For when the *Lord ſhall build up* Zion, *he will appear in his Glory.* Expect we muſt, yet that, th[illegible] retick and Doctrinal part of theſe [illegible]